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A

WEDDING IN WAR-TIME.

BY

EMORY J. HAYNES, D. D.,

PASTOR TREMONT TEMPLE CHURCH, BOSTON,

Author of "Dollars and Duty," "Are These Things So," Etc., Etc.

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A WEDDING IN WAR-TIME.

I.

SHE WAS A FARMER.

"THAT pretty farmer lass again!"

The young gentleman, Mark Broon by name, son of the old sailor-merchant Capt. Charles Broon, of New York, whose weather-beaten sign you may see on lower Broadway, looked up from whipping the daisies at the road-side and held his walking-stick in poise of genuine embarrassment.

Yet he had purposely crossed the pasture and threaded the cart-track through the dew-laden meadow that he might pass the white farm-house, in whose door he yesterday saw this same superb face. Not that it was a very resolute purpose when he left the little village hotel for a morning stroll. Still he had to confess that he hoped to see her again. She had troubled his dream, more or less, the preceding

night. But as he leaped the fence to gain the highway, just behind a sheltering clump of alder-bushes, in order to see a casual passer-by along the road, it was decidedly embarassing to catch sudden sight of her sitting calmly enthroned upon the stone-wall, and watching all his motions. He must have been under her eye all the way across her broad acres; a trespasser, save that no New England farmer would ever so regard it, even if he had trodden the grass in long serpentine traces stretching away to the village street where he entered the field. But if not resenting his trespass, this pretty spectator must have known that he came straight towards the farm-house, evidently impatiently; for though the roadway would have added a circling mile, it would have saved him the dew, not yet risen, which had soiled his blackened boots and bedraggled his clothing.

While he hesitated, a "hired man" looked up from his corn-planting and gave him "good morning."

"Ah, good morning to you, my man," replied young Broon, much relieved. "This is a noble farm. The Lane place, I believe they told me. Mr. Lane—"

"Mr. Lane is dead an' gone, sir, two year

ago," replied the workman, leaning on his hoe and glad of an excuse for a rest. His right eye seemed to be turned on the intruder, his left on his silent young mistress sitting yonder. "Yes, this ere place is kep' up good though. Mrs. Lane's a mighty hand at runnin' her place. We call it the Widder Lane place neow. Know her?"

"I have n't that pleasure," said Mr. Broon, resting his arms akimbo and thinking how hot the sun was becoming, all the while conscious that those great blue eyes from the wall, over which the maple shade and sunspots were playing, were regarding him.

"Stayin' up here?" asked the workman.

"Yes, for a time," was the reply.

"Pleasure, I s'pose?"

"Not altogether. Have business that calls me here."

"Buyin' hosses, neow, maybe? Colts is mighty high this spring."

The young fellow politely replied that he was not a horse dealer, nor a cattle drover, nor a speculator in hay, cheese, butter, nor any other "truck." All the while he was perfectly sure that the beauty on the wall was sitting like a charming rural judge in court, noting this per

sonal testimony by which a city stranger gave account of himself, or rather failed to give account of himself. For he had not yet told anything affirmatively of his errand "in these parts." He might as well. Why not, and done with it? It would soon be known from the tavern gossips; indeed he must be known from his former visits of last autumn, and the workmen whom he was boarding and lodging in the village. So he said:

"And, now, what is your name? You are good at asking questions, my man?"

"Dick Loyly, sir."

"Well, Dick, my name is Mark Broon. I'm the gentleman who purchased the top of Red Hill, that mountain over there, last fall. I see by your looks that you know all about it, and are now glad to see the simpleton, as you all seem to think me, who is building an expensive residence in such a place. Some people build a summer-house by the seaside, but I prefer mine among the mountains."

To no one had he before deigned so much of an explanation as the last remark, which was, in fact, addressed to the owner of the blue eyes on the stone wall.

There he stood, a well-knit frame of medium

stature, broad-shouldered, neatly-attired, but for his bedraggling through the sparkling meadows, aged just twenty-four, as we happen to know, that day; a year out of college, rich, and with no errand in life — but seeking one. He pushed his straw hat back to catch the mountain breeze and to think, — though what the hat has to do with the thinking machinery of embarrassed men is a mystery; but the motion revealed a fine brow, which you would have called high, no doubt, except for its width. His brown hair was cut in the close-cropped habit of the stroke-oar days. A rather full moustache with flowing ends became him. His face was neither fat nor lean, but his color was decided bronze and red. His eyes were hazel, noteworthy and honest. Indeed, it was something in the eye, something in the resolute mouth, and something more in the rich and unusual tones of his voice that impressed Blue Eyes on the wall that this stranger, Mark Broon, had a mind of his own. Whether to trust him or not, this city stranger, and extend the frank rural hospitality which he evidently sought, Blue Eyes was as yet undecided.

At present she is contrasting him with the flannel-shirted, cow-hide shod hoer of the corn,

whose stridulous voice is now silenced as he bends again to his toil.

But there she sits, aged twenty-two (forgive the accurate record, Laura Lane); her mother's only child and heir, a widow's darling and rich as things go among these sheep-raising hills. But there is money in the village bank's unsafe safe-deposit box too, as every young farmer in five townships could tell us. And those two years which exceed the usually marriageable twenty, I really mentioned significantly. All these two years the country folk have been wondering what she would, after all, finally do with her pretty self. Ripe at twenty, this cherry is fairly luscious at two and twenty, still hanging on the bough — sitting on the wall, rather.

Her broad straw hat, decidedly wider brimmed than the fashion in parasols at Newport that year, looked as odd as it was fastidious; for a green veil twined round the crown flew the breeze in a charming sort of way, and compelled the wearer to put up a fair white arm every now and then to control the whole rigging. She wore white, cut and made up in her own style, indescribable except that her garments lay about her and clung to her in comely grace, not to mention the dazzling effect as the clear

sunlight rested on the white beyond the shade of that big hat. In her plump, small hand she held a newspaper, yet in its wrapper, to secure which from the hole in the bar-post, where the stage-driver daily thrust it, was her errand hither. White and pink, despite the sun, were hands and face; a wonderfully clear complexion, the young man had noticed, such as perfect health alone can give, and, from some favored few, no amount of sun or wind can tan away. Very light and almost wavy hair, luxuriant, with stray silken skeins of it dividing her hands' attention with the veil — and yet crimps were not in fashion, that I know of, in '61, and so far up in the country. Such hair was it that young Broon, being something of an artist, longed to get the effect of pure sunlight on it. Her eyes — well, well, it was by her eyes that I first designated her in this history; they were the all-noticed and first-noticed, as they were the longest remembered by strangers. "That young lady with the blue eyes," people would say, in indicating her. And yet I know not which I would most dwell upon, were I to dare a description, their beauty or their kindness, the richest charm, by the way, in a woman's eyes.

Whatever of wood nymph and wings, however, had been suggested as she half reclined upon the ponderous granite stones, was dispelled when the young lady stepped gracefully down in good solid flesh and blood, weight and stature, to the soft turf. She had evidently made up her mind to greet and welcome the strange young man with the simple, neighborly good-will which is usual among these unconventional hills.

With hat in hand, and politely bowing, Mark Broon was not slow to take the overture and give her, in turn:

"Good morning. The lady of the house, — or farm, I should say, I presume. May I introduce myself? Broon is my name, — of Red Hill, if I may so say; though I hardly dare hope you have heard of your new neighbor."

"Indeed I have heard of you, sir," she replied, advancing now towards the bars. She showed pearls in her mouth, and her voice was musical and kind, like her eyes. She seemed glad, moreover, that he had relieved her of the need of speaking first. "We do not stand much on ceremony, we farmers, Mr. Broon, as you will discover, I trust, to your pleasure, if at times to your annoyance. Curiosity grows like a weed in the country."

"Allow me," said Broon, dropping the two top bars for her egress to the highway.

"Thank you," she replied, blushing perceptibly at sight of his tact, for she had not, till that minute, fully decided to walk along the highway with him as she returned to the farmhouse. However, there seemed to be nothing else for it now, and she put a trim slipper over the bottom bar precipitately, not to trouble him too much, and stood beside him. "Do not mind to replace them, sir. Dick, put up the bars, please.

But Mark had begun to replace them as she spoke. Meanwhile, Miss Laura crossed the roadway to the further side. On a country highway pedestrians best walk along the very edge, or in the path of the wheels at least. "A safe distance apart," thought she, as they began to move towards the house not far away.

"So you and your mother are the best farmers in this country?" he said.

"Indeed?" she answered brightly, as much as to say, "Who told you all about us? and why have you been inquiring?" But she did not pursue her advantage as she continued pleasantly, "And would you consider that a compliment to two women?"

"Nothing is nobler than duty well done,

whatever the duty, Miss Lane. But why did you challenge me with such a question?"

"I really did not intend it as a challenge," she replied. "Only" — and she grew silent as she picked her way through the dust.

"Only you cherish the prevalent suspicion of us unfortunate city visitors?" he said with a roguish twinkle in his glance.

"Suspicions are the worst of mental companions, I think," was her answer. "And I entertain none of you, sir. Yet, of course, you are aware that ladies who live on a farm cannot quite be strangers to work. I can milk a cow, for instance, though that is not saying I do it every day. I can tell you the present price of good Timothy hay or clover by the ton, of butter, eggs and cheese, which, by the way, I do assist in making every day. I keep the accounts of the farm, and have done it ever since papa died, when I'm at home."

"Then you are not always at home? Perhaps you visit in the city — my own city, for instance," and he caught at an adjacent shrub, stripping off the leaves as he made the bold venture for a biographical item.

"No; though I have been in New York. We have friends there. But I referred to

absence at school. What I meant was, however, that we country people credit you city people with keeping — how shall I say it?" she exclaimed in charming confusion. "You think that a lady's place is in the parlor, or at some elegant ease, or busy with society, or dress, or art, or, — oh dear, dear! How did I ever come to express my opinions of you people so openly!" and she gave the great hat a convenient tip to leeward, hiding her face.

Mark Broon laughed heartily, at which she quickly peeped out from beneath the hat at him, half scared, half indignant. But his next word rather reassured her, for he said:

"I shall not dispute you. Perhaps I might criticise the city girls more intimately, and yet more severely, than you have. Perhaps I don't fancy them myself overmuch. But I know some city girls who can ride finely."

"Yes? There is my filly just come down to the gate. Isn't she a beauty! Do you ride, sir? I mean do you really love a horse? A horse that really knows and loves you as my Nell does me?" all of which questions came forth in child-like carelessness, the speaker apparently unconscious that any one of them might seem suggestive of an invitation to this strange young man.

She was all eyes for the pretty little mare who was whinnying restlessly at the gate of the lane at sight of her young mistress. She now began waving one of those white, round arms at the animal gleefully.

"Yes, that is a fine animal. Yes, I like a good, true-hearted horse, as I do any other of God's creatures which is good and true. Yes, I ride. Then you never saw me pass here on my lonely way?"

He looked hard enough at her with this last remark; but it was decidedly too pointed. She had given the hat, veil, and all, another deft touch by this time.

And really, now, the rural beauty began to see that she had gone quite far enough even for rural hospitality. *Had* she invited him to take a gallop with her? No; she was sure she had not. *Had* she been airing her accomplishments before him? No; she had not told him that she could paint, nor speak French, nor that she knew how to dress, nor that she had graduated at that school so briefly mentioned; a school, by the way, which has to this day no superior for young ladies, if it is located in a certain country village. No; she had only thought, in intense self-consciousness, "I wonder if he knows or imagines?"

And the reader must not charge Laura with conceit either. I have betrayed her secret thoughts. What young woman of two and twenty is not intensely self-conscious under the eyes of a fine young fellow like Mark Broon? And then, too, had she indeed not seen him pass on his "lonely way" more than once? Many a knight goes in and out a young lady's air-castles in the course of months of day-dreams. But her best vindication against conceit is the peculiar suspicion, of being considered unsophisticated and "verdant as the hills," which country people harbor towards their city visitors. You must confess that you wouldn't like to be patronized even as a "rural beauty." I don't charge Mark Broon with attempting it; I only say that she was resolved that he had better not attempt it, resolved long ago, if it should ever chance that they met.

He stood now opening the little white wicket to the gravelled walk which, bordered with flowers, ran down from the low white farm-house.

"What a lovely spot you have made of this," he said, glancing up at the cosy dwelling. "Nothing can exceed the grace of vines,—those running over the dormer of a stoop, as I believe you Yankees call the porch, and all about the

front door. There is character in that building, Miss Lane. I'll warrant you it looks just like the man who built it; your father, perhaps."

"Yes; papa and grandpa. That old part was grandpa's work; this extension is my father's. I know what you mean. All city houses look just alike. We all are wondering what your splendid house will look like."

She had not yet stepped through the gate, but stood close up beside him, as the hedge and a hitching post compelled her. A splendid match for him in stature was she.

"I do beg the privilege of inviting you to inspect Eagleroost for yourself," said he promptly,—"you and Mrs. Lane. Indeed, I shall have a house-warming for all my neighbors, if they will do me the honor."

After that it would not do to omit it, she decided at once.

"Thank you. But will you come in and meet my mamma now? Oh, I forgot, mamma's headache day!" and she was quite at a loss again.

But he helped her quick enough by saying, "You might invite me to the cheese room and feed me on fresh curd. Did you ever know a boy who wasn't wild over cheese curd?"

"I could tell you more about girls and cheese,"

she responded with a pretty laugh, and passed on before him, saying, "I certainly will give you a real fresh taste. This way, please."

They turned to the right, and walked directly down to the extreme end of the yard; through flocks of geese which spread their snowy wings and hissed a protest as they swept disdainfully towards the barns; through rear-guard of turkeys, most of which were too young to "gobble, gobble," though gobblers there were; through a bevy of hens and chickens, which cackled across the ample lawn; and finally making their way straight across the lawn itself, as smooth as velvet, as rich as any suburban stretch of green you ever saw, and bordered with roses, well-stocked, though hardly flowering yet, it being early May.

In a moment more they were in the clean, cool cheeze-room. He had removed his hat instinctively, as if he had entered a parlor. She had snatched off hers, and lo, the glorious blond hair, on which the morning sunlight, through the eastern window, was entrancingly falling! She was soon stooping and lifting, setting this tub aside and that, the strong and shapely arms bared to the shoulder. If he had known how to assist her, he yet doubtless could not for very admiration of her.

Of course this eating cheese curd together, and cheese of her own make, too, — think of that fact! — soon broke down the conventionalities altogether. That is, I mean, eating cheese curd from a pretty girl's fingers, as you have to, unless you can trust your own unskilled and perhaps unwashed fingers to guide the palpitating morsel, is the best possible introduction. By the time he had tasted and complimented to his satisfaction, and hers respectively, these two honest-hearted young people were no longer strangers. As they emerged from the house it seemed quite proper for her to invite him to call at any time — of course for the same purpose, the fresh cheese. They were merry almost to gaiety, uttering little pleasantries as they were about to part at the foot of the garden.

"But I suppose I shall see you at church tomorrow," he said.

She turned on him quickly with evident surprise. Church? Was this handsome cavalier from the great, gay city observant of the Sabbath's approach, and so punctilious for church worship that he proposed to perform it in that unpretending little village affair? Certainly it was the last thing in her thoughts of him. "But, of course," she said instantly, to herself,

knowing the custom of country lovers, "it is only as a convenient trysting place that he mentions it. If I tell the truth I shall not displease this young man of the world." After which, casting him a merry glance, yet a searching one, she said:

"Why, no, Mr. Broon. Mamma entertains small favor for the Orthodox church. I go occasionally; but while I don't quite believe as mamma does, yet I'm very happy all the day long, as my life is now; and — and don't need to — well, it is so soon, and — "

Poor thing! Her face lost its smiles, word by word, as she noted the grave cast of unconcealed astonishment which shadowed his. Her reply, half attempting to give reasons and intended probably to advance into confident argument, as was the custom with the proper young men of the region and the shocked old clergyman of the village, could not maintain itself in that vein before Mark's thoughtful eyes. She began to pull a rose to pieces, and, to her own surprise, to almost hope that he would go without reply.

Laura Lane was not the first to be impressed, and strangely overawed by that peculiar look now resting on Mark Broon's fine face. Mag-

nanimous, yet not commanding; pure even to severity, yet kind; it was a look of pain, moreover, in this case; and while she watched it with demure glances, she noticed that its spirited first flashes faded into a shyness, as if he was disposed to retreat from some evil influence and injury. Or, it might be that he was too gallant to enter on debate with her and, by effort, was restraining himself. At all events she was sure of two things: that she had not enhanced his good opinion of herself, — for which was she certain that she cared? and that he would not continue the conversation upon the religious topic, as most religious people whom she had met seemed to think they must do for her rescue. Indeed, she concluded that undoubtedly he was that, to her, inexplicable creature, a rich, educated and pious young man.

Recovering now his fascinating manner, he said, "Very well, no doubt we shall encounter each other on the road, if nowhere else. By the way, may I not call for you Monday morning for a gallop over these hills? You shall show me many a mountain path which even I have not explored."

She might possibly have done it, made the appointment on the impulse of a confidence

which Mark Broon inspired in all who met him. And yet I venture that she would have found some other excuse, had not her mother just then most opportunely thrown open the blind of the low embowered window which opened into her retired room, and shown her pale, interesting face thereat.

"Mamma, did you think me lost?" This in a silvery shout. Then to Mr. Broon, "Come, I will introduce you most informally."

The visitor was glad to find this added way into the good graces of the family. The languid lady, most unlike the robust farmer's widow and successful manager of these flourishing acres which he had pictured to himself, greeted him kindly; had of course heard of him, through the village newspaper gossip; was not always as poorly as he saw her to-day; indeed, was expecting the physician any moment; yes, there was his carriage approaching over the hill. Would Mr. Broon call again, and continue the acquaintance so casually begun? and yet it was a guarded welcome. So much so, the shrewd woman, that he hardly knew why, young Broon did not venture to prefer to the mother the request that the daughter had evidently referred to her.

The physician's carriage now being at the the block, Broon touched his hat and was about to go. But to his surprise, instead of entering the house, the younger lady offered to lead him by another exit towards the highway. Her lead, though delicate, and with no verbal expression, was decided and unmistakable. Mark yielded to it. They passed away from the path by which the physician would enter.

"Do you know, our — or that is, mamma's physician? I mean," she continued with an unmistakable little flutter of apprehension, "did you ever hear of him in the city?"

"In New York? Which is he?" replied Mark, turning to see two gentlemen, one of say sixty years, and standing idly waiting; the other a young man perhaps five and twenty, who was hitching the horse.

"The elder man is the doctor. Smiles is his name," said she. Her face was strikingly pale; her voice sounded timid, and her words hesitating. "The other is his son, Erastus."

No; Mark had never heard of "the great Dr. Smiles." Had her mother found him remarkably skilful? What was his peculiarity? Or why did she ask? But of course he might be quite ignorant of the most famous physician without that

being to the man's prejudice, having himself no remembrance of ever having been sick enough to call one.

She was now opening the gate for him. Her hand fumbled at even that familiar latch. As he bent to help her, their hands touched accidentally. Hers were as cold as ice. All the light and laughter, moreover, had gone out of that wonderful face. It wore an aspect of indescribable distress.

Had he known her but a few days, instead of less than a few hours, he would have offered her the comfort of a direct, "What is the matter?" But as it was, he only looked it; and feeling the delicacy of the situation, was about to even hasten his departure. But the young girl's eyes seemed fairly to cling to him, as if for protection; yet, with great self-control, she merely remarked:

"You seemed to wonder that we never went to church. We have too much religion, such as it is, at home."

"Too much religion?"

"That man is a religious healer."

"A what?"

"Indeed, I know not how else to characterize him, sir. He heals by — by spiritualistic pro-

cesses. Oh, oh, what have I said! And yet have you never heard of the widow Lane's 'superstition,' as the villagers call it?"

And before Broon could answer, the girl had flown, like some white-winged thing, up through the garden shrubbery, and disappeared from his sight.

II.

DR. SMILES AND HIS SON.

"I TELL you, father, it will not work!"

"What will not work, my dear Erastus?" answered Dr. Smiles with soft and rising inflection and exasperatingly calm.

The elder man reclined in the easiest chair the little hotel could afford. He rested his elbows on its arms, and put the tips of his fingers together, one by one, beginning with the thumbs, which could be turned back almost in a half circle.

The son took another turn up and down the parlor, which the famous doctor had hired for his exclusive use, not minding the price, and which he improvised as an office during his short and lucrative tarry among these ailing country folk. His monopoly of the best room in the only Bethlehem hotel open at this season of the year, was not a bad advertisement either. It discommoded everybody, and these were the days when the represenatives of not a few wealthy

invalids from the cities were up here prospecting for White Mountain summer board. But the good doctor was by no means averse to combining business with pleasure. His vast city patronage generally began to tell on even his iron endurance by spring. Experience had shown him that severe winters, a salt pork diet, and sparse physicians over these vast and noble hills, made eager welcome for "the healer." He came, moreover, with a sounding of trumpets.

Perhaps one had better not venture to give, yet, the greatest reason for his welcome. You would not call a Yankee an easy dupe in a trade. He is not over credulous in a horse bargain. He has been the boldest critic of senators, the most doughty defender of liberty, and the ablest legislator for equal rights in all our national history. Perish the hand that writes an untruth against my fathers, of whom I count seven generations to the soil born! Yet I dare write it that New England has been good soil for the growth of superstitions and "heresies." Of all the grotesque beliefs of the civilized world, where will you find more strange than in some of those villages where warring sects of orthodoxy have impoverished each other? A village of fifteen hundred souls, all told, and four

different denominations struggling to see whose church spire shall first crumble with red rot to the ground. Four devoted clergymen fighting starvation, and only escaping by a liberal contribution of "hay, if they cut it themselves," pumpkins and potatoes, corn and squashes, loaded into the bags they carry in pastoral rounds, "donations" scrupulously charged in settling the salary at the year's end, and other humiliating begging in broadcloth! Farmers pious and high-minded, the noblest of the earth, there are. Yet other farmers, like the literal heathen, who never think of attending the distant village church, who have quietly slipped away from the old beliefs, sometimes with thought, and yet oftener with no verdict of the mind. Merely blank to faith, and given to the hard grind for a pinched fortune. Often indifferent, often bitterly hating the Christianity they have rejected, and ready victims for religious adventurers. A man who believes nothing is preparing to believe anything. Dr. Smiles is intending to erect his "Great Curative Religious Sanitarium" up here, and if he does he may make it pay.

"What will not do, my son?" again asked the doctor, as the young man stood yet silent and gazing out on the blue mountains.

"Why, this plan of yours regarding Laura Lane and myself," responded the youth, with an abrupt turn. "Here I am graduated. For a good year I threw myself not a little in her society, by visiting my sisters at the same school with her. But the girls will tell you that she abominates me, except when you are present. We renew the siege up here now for a month, and all the advantages mine; but it is evident to me that that young Broon — whom I used to know, by the way, at college —"

"Indeed!"

"Yes. Never would acknowledge me though, by more than a distant bow, and has not about the village here; did not the day we first set eyes on each other up here that time at the widow's. Well, he makes progress with her, or can if he wishes, as I am hardly certain yet that he does; and if he hesitates I believe it is on account of your intimacy with the family. He's rich, and besides being rich, Broon is—"

But the young gentleman did not conclude his sentence. Instead, he resumed his fretted stride up and down the long room, the frail floor trembling under his feet, the faded and dusty three-ply carpet but feebly muffling his

stalwart tread. Yet he knew that time served for this important conference; the "office hours" were over for the day; the last patient had retired, and the paternal wallet was well fattened that morning.

After a while the son paused on his heel at the opposite end of the great center-table, and thrust his hands down yet a little deeper into his trousers' pockets. As he did not even yet offer to finish his last sentence, his father coolly studied him over the tips of his bent thumbs. He could not say that his son was fine looking. Indeed, it occurred to the sire that his Erastus had rather grown in ill-favoredness of late. He confessed to himself that the boy's hair was too light — it was flaxen — and his heavy moustache too dark — it was large and jet black, upon honor, reader. His own father smiled cynically at such a curiosity, one black eye and one decidedly blue. The forehead was lumpy, yet decidedly intellectual. The young man had a scholarly air, and looked like anything but a business man, the calling proposed to himself and agreed upon in the family councils. Everything in this group was agreed upon in family council. Tall, broad-shouldered, with a waist like a long meal sack, he spread his well-dressed legs apart — indeed,

his whole dress was in the extreme of fashion — and stood looking at his father, out of his blue eye particularly, and yet said nothing.

"Well, Erastus," — the thumbs and fingers to the front, — "you say Broon has something else besides money to recommend him to Miss Lane. What else?"

"A bright mind, for instance," faltered Erastus.

The paternal thumbs seemed to ask, "What else?"

"And a royal good heart, though I do hate him!"

Thumbs were not yet satisfied.

"And a fine person; he's handsome."

Thumbs rolled very far back by the long white forefingers of each hand in turn, still questioning.

"Well, father, I'd rather not say what else straight to your face."

One thumb was now bent over till it touched the wrist. The other strange fingers were all in air. The coal-black eyes of Dr. Smiles glistened through the forest of his own fingers, and fire seemed to stream from them. The son was accustomed to the spell, but yet he grew hot in the glare. All the while the older face was

wreathed in its own peculiar tranquil smile. Not a word, however, from behind the bush of iron-gray whiskers and moustache.

"Well, if you will have it, father, Broon has family station in the city. His father is not a — not a —"

"Quack, my son?" softly spoke Dr. Smiles.

"Heavens! my father! I have knocked a man down for connecting that word with your name!" Erastus brought his great hand out of pocket and crashed it down on the table. His pale face flushed scarlet as he continued, "You know, father, that we all reverence you. To us you are a divine man. But there is no use talking; the wicked world don't believe in your — in your — art and science. So much the worse for the world, say you? Yes, because you dwell in the sublime heights of Parnassus, among the gods, sir. But we, the children, your daughters, and I, your only son, we dwell among mankind. We feel the sneer."

"Sneers, Erastus?"

The words came from the elder man's moveless face as blue flame leaps up from a spirit lamp. There was no burst of anger. It was a quiet, unconquerable contempt for the world's sneer. It was imperturbable sneer for sneer; and you felt

that this one sneer could out-hiss the combined world.

"I know, I know," said the son, plunging into pockets again, and pacing the room while he addressed the three-ply underfoot. "But we children cannot laugh back at mankind as you can; for we do not victimize them. We meet it everywhere, that we are a family of adventurers. Not so bad if we were succeeding. You make money out of the weakness of mankind, but I cannot as a merchant; your daughters cannot. It was a mistake, our moving to S——. It is too small a city. New York was better. In New York people do not scrutinize so closely, for there everybody is on the make. But in S——, though you grow rich as Ned, yet society is closed to you and us. And Laura Lane's kindred in that city are — well, you know the mayor is her uncle, and a bucolic ex-governor is another uncle. I? There isn't a ghost of a chance for me with the girl, unless —"

"Unless I compel her, eh?" broke in the good doctor," as he unwound his long legs and reached for a cigar. He began smoking and went on to say:

"Erastus, my hopeful, I must help you. I will. I am devoted to my family. Imagine yourself

at our home in S——. Look about you; not many physicians, however regular" — and there was another shoot of the spirit-lamp flame playing about that word, "regular,"—"are lodged like me. Is not our house a petit palace? Do we not live like princes? I tell you, it pays, Erastus, this quackery, though I spurn the word. What's in a name, boy? It brings clean money. Men lift their hats to me, and women employ me. I'll marry my girls off to advantage, be sure of that; and you shall have Laura Lane. D' ye hear? Mrs. Lane is a good soul. I find the girl herself not altogether intractable; she obeys me. She visits at S——. S—— is better than New York because it is certain miles from New York. You are dull; was I not well known in New York as an unsuccessful school-teacher, and a very zealot in the church, before I went into the present business — profession I mean? And now this family, this proud, virtuous, benevolent, rich family of Broon! Capt. Broon. Yes." More burning spirits. "Why, sir, I can put my thumb on him, if I set about it, like *that!*" The speaker pressed his right thumb to the table, and rolled it slowly through its half circle, as if it were the wheel of fate.

"How?"

"How? Why, how do I effect my purposes?" The doctor did here deign to regard the world's ears enough to glance about the room to make sure none of the world's many ears were within hearing distance, when, leaning forward, half his weight on that thumb, he continued, "I have influence with men. It is not money influence, nor political, nor social. Yet where is the man who can resist me? You know how men melt like wax before my eye, and under my promises of restored health. Capt. Broon indeed! Young Mark Broon indeed! Mayors and governors indeed!"

Harder and harder pressed the thumb upon the poor table at each exclamation, till the pine wood trembled, and the unremoved lamp, borne up by a mimic Hercules, fairly shook the glass shade it supported. Presently the wick might almost be lighted by the fire from those black glances.

"And yet, father, it is not every disease that you can cure."

"What, for instance?"

"A broken heart, for instance, father."

"I don't catch your meaning," and he settled back into the great chair, smoking at ease,

as if the meaning could be of no account if caught.

"Why, suppose this glorious girl is compelled to assent some day, when all's ready, to the calling of a clergymen into her mother's parlor; is compelled by your power over her to say yes to the marriage ceremony, what then? She is to be my wife, and not yours. When you are out of sight, what? She'll die upon my hands, sir, of a broken heart. Oh, 'tis too desperate a game, father. I will not go on."

"Oh, yes you will, Erastus." This in such silvery calmness, yet in such confidence of the strange eyes.

"True," responded the son, sinking pliantly into a chair. "I shall go on! I always have. I, at least, cannot resist you. But I shall go on to destruction; for you yourself know that not all persons are sensitive to your personal magnetism. Capt. Broon may not be. Mark Broon, I am sure, will not be."

"They need not be, Erastus; though I doubt your doubts. I believe I could win both of them if permitted sufficient opportunity. However, you need not strike a man when you can set another at it. Our lives are like threads in a woven texture. Cut one and others unravel at a dis-

tance. "But yet," he added tranquilly, "what need of plotting mischief against people who have not yet proved my foes? Not one of these persons has yet crossed our path, except in your fruitful imagination. As to any favor that Miss Lane has shown young Broon, why, didn't it drop out that first day we encountered him there, that the wise mother disapproved of the young lady's cordial hospitality to a perfect stranger? That shows you that their acquaintance began not a month ago. She rides with him. Ask her to ride with you, you dullard. Oh, I wish I could do your wooing for you!"

"You will have to, sir, I fear," said the son, dropping into a chair and covering his face with his hands.

"Pshaw, man!" resumed the elder gentleman, leaning forward and slyly touching the other's hand with the glowing cigar, a mere touch, which made the other start, at which the father laughed. "Pshaw, I say. Couldn't you see for yourself that very first day that the rich widow was on our side? And haven't you seen enough of this noble girl herself to know that she would give her life to please that mother? There's filial piety for you."

"She is indeed a child of most loyal love!" exclaimed the young man. "Her mother is her idol. Her mother's wish is her religion."

"Religion? Exactly. There you have it again. The Lanes are sceptics. And Broon, now! I have seen the fellow, every Sunday that we have been here, scrupulously wending his way down the street towards the churches. He must be a fiery church enthusiast. Do you know anything about it?"

"Oh, yes. He is all that sort of thing," was Erastus' reply, as he thrust his hands again into his pockets, and pushed his legs under the table. "Curious," and a smile stole over his features at the memory. "He was stroke oar in the best race we ever had, and yet wouldn't practice on Sunday, wouldn't stay away from church, wouldn't bet. I don't believe that fellow ever went to Fordham or Sheepshead Bay in his life; and yet they say he drives as good horses as go up Fifth Avenue. He never was a prig in college, — mighty popular. Of course I've seen nothing of his New York life myself; but I wrote young Dr. Lathrop — you know him, — who is in society — that most exclusive society, I mean,— last week, asking about my rival. He says, 'He's a tip-top fellow, little odd, whose only trouble

is that he's rather too nice in morals to enjoy town, and too rich to have any serious business in life.' Lathrop says," and here Erastus fumbled in his pocket for the letter which he began to read, "that the fellows laugh a good deal about Mark Broon's errand in life; he is looking for a mission, — that is, some heroic adventure, something more chivalric than adding to the pile his father will leave him. But for all that, he's a mighty fine chap; worthy to be trusted, etc., etc," and he folded up the letter with, "Of course I didn't tell Lathrop why I wanted to know."

Musing a while, the father at length resumed:

"Inexplicable human nature! You would suppose such a youth could find what he wanted nearer than this farm-house."

"What? So beautiful a woman as she? Seriously, father, where did you ever see such a face, such a farm, such wealth, such innocence?"

"But it all depends, I foresee," continued the doctor yet musing and unheeding the interruption, "upon whether or not he can impress this fair unbeliever with his religious views. He is evidently too sincere a man to wed a sceptic, however beautiful. Sincere? It is the respectability

of the thing rather than sincerity. It wouldn't be respectable, according to his social circle, to be joined to one of my pupils."

"But the young lady is not your disciple," said Erastus, who was keeping close track of his father's reasoning.

"Not exactly; yet her mother is."

With that they left it for the present and went out to take a drive. The doctor was a free liver, as most adventurers are. He had the daily use of the finest team of horses to be had in that "horse country," both for professional uses and excursions of pleasure.

Erastus held the reins well, and they were invariably given to him while the "eminent healer," as the advertisements styled him, leaned back in the vehicle advantageously poised alike for public exhibition and personal ease.

"Drive past the widow's place, my son," said the doctor, as the animals sprang away, "and I will point out to you the eligibility of that hill-top for my sanitarium."

A few minutes later, as they slowed into a walk past the pretty embowered cottage, the doctor said:

"There! You see this commands the whole village, and yet it is a mere easy swell of the

undulating valley. It would be in full sight of the railway station and the coach lines. Everybody would have it in full view. A breezy spot. All this maple grove at its back; that lake just over the knoll. Oh, it is the situation I have been searching for these years!"

The son smiled at the mention of years, for it was not yet five since the *parvenu* physician was vexing his brains over refractory pupils and the want of them, in his distant town school. But the Smiles family indulged the figment on the father's part, being afraid to cross him, while he, on his part, spoke of years to accustom himself to the sound, and to prevent awkward slips that might in public betray his newness in the healing art.

"If you were less unfortunate in Wall Street, father, — and, by-the-way, *do* you think it wise for you to dabble there so much? You have a good revenue — "

"And how long will it continue so?" was the reply. "I know what you mean. Why not make hay while the sun shines, husband my resources, and buy the place out and out, or give up the scheme altogether, confining myself to private practice? But I must spend freely; it comes natural to me, and was so to you and

the children; and life is short, and heretofore — I mean years ago — life was pinched and poor enough. Let's enjoy, say I! As to the revenue of private practice such as mine, it's mighty uncertain. I must continue to startle the people. I must have my great Sanitarium. As to buying out and out what I can get as a free gift, perhaps, — who knows what the benevolent widow may do for suffering humanity, and *in memoriam* of the departed Lane? There! My idea is," and he sat up to indicate with his finger the advantages which the widow's present dwelling presented for a beginning, "to start off with this very structure. It is itself an ample old affair and finely built. Fill this up first with patients. Then erect the larger building just beyond there."

And as the spirited colts began to be impatient, descending the finely sloping road beyond, they were soon sweeping round the little lake and along the winding river, which added features of the landscape's desirability for their purposes, engrossed them afresh, as it had many times before now.

III.

CAPTAIN BROON AND HIS SON.

MARK BROON did meet Laura Lane at the little village church on the Sunday following his informal call at her mother's, and on several other Sundays succeeding. The villagers remarked her presence, made all sorts of guesses as to the reason why, and finally hit upon the correct one. Indeed, that was evident enough after a little time, for she and "the young city feller" usually found each other at the service's close, and walked away side by side towards her home.

"She'll turn Orthodox quick 'nough, now," said old deacon Pitkins, one day, as he observed the couple depart. And the old man drew out his jack-knife, cutting off a fresh quid of Black Jack with a smile of satisfaction. "I've mourned arter the backslidin' of widder Lane and Zion's loss long while. But that ar young Broon's sound, an'll fetch the hull family back. Fresh chaw, brother Bodely? Tackle a fresh chaw?" extending his plug to his associate deacon.

"I don't know 'bout that," responded deacon Bodely; not about the "fresh chaw," which he accepted readily, and with a surprised glance at the unusual generosity born of a great, though he feared, a deceitful hopefulness. Then, casting a look round at the weather as they descended the steps towards the horse-sheds and their noon whittling, brother Bodely interjected:

"Pesky dry! No hay year. Dry's punk up our way. No, I don't know 'bout that fine gal's bein' brought back tew the church by mere courtin'. Ah, the dess'lations of Zion by these ere nothin'arian beliefs! Speret'lism and backslidin's hard tew rut eout. Besides, I see that ere new-fangled healer a-hangin' round the widder's a gud deal. His son is arter the gal tew."

"No doubt,—deacon,—" replied Mr. Pitkins. "But,"—(The dashes shall represent shots at the mullein stalks which grew temptingly within spitting distance of the venerable pair on a dropped rail of the fence near the sheds. And they were venerable, reader, if genuine rugged and severe sectarian loyalty is venerable when the piety is nearly dead.) "But—you can see this ere fine young Broon—giv us a subscription of a hundred dollars easy as a wink last week fur

paintin' the spire — you can see him a ridin' hossback — with that sweet-as-a-picter Miss Lane putty often — "

"Yes. He's trying tew plow with that heifer if he can. I'd like ter see him git her. She's wuth savin' tew the cause."

And yet they were good neighbors, good farmers and good members as things went in the village churches where "the cause" meant little more than sustaining the temporalities of a church dying or dead spiritually.

"He's a marster feller fur lively meetin's, is this Broon," resumed "father" Pitkins. "He axed me t'other day — ef our prayer-meetin's ware allus as dead as the one he was in Wednesday night afore — "

"Leetle sprung, deacon? jest a leetle?" asked deacon Bodely, who had soon walked over to the sheds where the horses stood.

"No! Folded so! sure's preachin', brother. You can ax the parson — ef that colt's fore leg was ever different. Feel her all over. Go right ahead — wanted to know ef our preacher felt discouraged ever tew think o' them dead an' alive meetin's and long prayers. Hi, Zip! So, so! Put yer hand right down tew the fetlock, Bodely. The little scamp! never knew her tew kick —"

"But the set time tew favor Zion hain't come tew the village fur a long while, brother. She'll be white, come in white, in a few years — them gray hairs."

"Of course. Broon was a-sayin' that we oter hev new singin' books and a organ and Sunday-school papers, an' be a-doin' mission work among the hills about. Offered tew give the money — that's where she over reached in the snow last year — a little lamp ile and powder 'll bring in the hair."

"'We must pray more for spiritual power,' sez Broon tew me," replied Bodely. "He was a-tellin' me of the power them city churches hez. He sez, sez he — not more'n a hundred an' fifty fur her, deacon. Sposen 'twas Monday, I'll giv ye that fur her. Broon sez that the wickedest folks on the one hand, and the most devoted sarvents of the Lord on t'other hand, aire found in great cities; and that these ere churches of ourn in the country aire neither cold nor hot."

"Sposen 'twas Monday, I'll take a hundred and seventy-five for the colt, deacon," was Pitkin's answer, as the good man shot again at the nearest nodding mullein stalk with wonderful labial marksmanship.

"Sposen 'twas Monday, I'll leave it tew Lem Dowd an' Ichabod Simms. Here, boys, yew know colts, come over here."

The two young fellows drew near, munching their red round doughnuts and cheese as they came. To whom deacon Bodely at once remarked:

"He was a-talkin' about the speretual dearth of Zion, which this ere young city feller seems tew feel more'n we do — ez ye wud a-heard ef ye had been tew prayer-meetin' as ye ought t'other night, and a-keepin' yer cuvenant vows; and we were jest sposen 'twas Monday, shall it be a hundred an' fifty or seventy-five for that ere colt?"

"But it's Sunday, deacon, Sunday, Sunday!" exclaimed one of the young men, with a twinkle in his eye, as he gave the venerable man this mock rebuke, at the same time he came near enough to pat the colt on the rump with the hand he had pulled from his trousers pocket. "We sha'n't help your hoss trade unless you help us decide what politics this young Broon is."

"Oh, he's a hot R'publican. That's easy 'nough," replied deacon Bodely.

"And tell him," put in the other youth, pointing significantly with his left elbow, for both

his hands were in his pockets, "whether he'd better hoss-whip the city chap for cuttin' him out with the widder's daughter."

"There ain't no two boys in town that can get that harndsome Broon on the hip lock," answered Lem. "Besides, I like the feller. He's a gentleman."

"Oh, you talk!" said Ichabod. "You know that a dozen boys are gettin' up muscle for him. 'Cause he's goin' to git the girl. He'll have his saddle girth slit, or his mare's tail sheered, afore the summer's out, or my name ain't Simms!"

"Afore the summer's out the boys 'll have more r'spect'ble fighin' to do, if the papers tell the truth," thoughtfully remarked Dowd.

"Then only them as can hire substitutes, or don't get drafted, can marry, eh? Well, that fust means your Broon," this from Simms bitterly.

As for the facts, these old and young observers had noted them accurately enough. There was many a scamper over the hills, both Mark and Laura being superb riders. There was an occasional ride in Mark's mere skeleton of a carriage, which his steads whipped over the dusty road as if they were winged creatures.

But there were comparatively few visits at the widow's house,—just enough for propriety, before or after a ride, and brief.

There were reasons for this. The good matron had had abundant occasion for the strange doctor's attendance for a month past, and his son was his driver; and, notwithstanding her courteous hospitality to Mark, it was evident that the mother was less cordial to him in the doctor's presence. Yet Mark had never been told that there was not a fair field for him if he could win.

And then, too, by many a little artifice, transparent enough if one cared to look into them, though he did not, Broon found it all arranged for him so that somehow he made but brief calls at the house, and even then only rarely —now that he came to think of it, not more than three times—met the distinguished and supernatural healer and his son when there.

"Reared as I have been, Miss Lane," Mark had one day ventured to blurt out, "all such superstitious pretense, in the holy name of religion, is indescribably offensive."

"Offensive!"

And she had reddened as the rose, first looking high and mighty, then cast down with

pitiful distress. It was that same aspect of terror which he had first seen at the garden gate, of which he often thought, without coming to an explanation satisfactory to himself. Her confusion was so great that he would not pursue the inquiry, in his own vehicle as they happened to be, as to why she so dreaded this man. He only added:

"I am sure you, a healthy, high-spirited girl, do not yield credence to any such sepulchral and unearthly notions!"

But the young man's eyes were bent, with the search of a serious man pursuing things serious in the make-up of his future happiness, upon her lovely features.

Her self-control was wonderful. Even as he watched her she had recovered herself. And the face was so pure, the beaming smile so enchanting, that he could not, would not suspect her of a wizzard's creed. Besides, just at that moment, at a turn of the mountain road, a new and noble vista of the landscape burst upon them.

"You shall teach me what to believe, Mr. Broon. Just now let me point out" — and she fell to describing the far mountain ranges.

So passed on the few short or long weeks, —

short or long as you, reader, or these lovers in memory, measure them. The elder Broon came up from the city at length, to inspect his son's latest doings, though all the boy's plans had been taken and pursued with fatherly assent from the first. Imagine this father and son seated on the veranda of "Eaglecroft."

"Well, Mark, if you like the place, an old sailor like me can make port here well enough for the summer, once in a while."

"Father," answered the young gentleman turning about with a serious air, "you are getting too old to stick so close to business as you do. You shall spend the season here and enjoy your age."

"Tut, tut, boy! Age? Old? There isn't a rotton timber in the craft yet. Ha, ha!"

It was a laugh among ten thousand; so deep, from the heart, and so full of sunshine, meanwhile, was the old bronzed face. Thirty years of the sea could not be bleached out by ten years of the shore, but the bronze was ever bright as new. Even in repose the weather-beaten countenance was only rugged kind. In laughter it was indescribably radiant with good-will toward all on the sea-girt globe.

Mark regarded his father in a sort of hopeless

silence for a moment. The boy's eyes almost expressed worship, they were so tender, pathetic and reverential. He had thought he saw the scar upon his father's left cheek grow deeper of late, as if he were at last amenable to fatigue like ordinary mortals. He had mentioned it to his step-mother, a fellow-worshipper with himself.

"Great God! can my father indeed grow old like other men. And must he die, some far off day?" but not aloud.

Withdrawing his gaze, and confessing himself helpless in further protest against the New York store, Mark continued aloud:

"You approve my choice of site then. Why, father, the landscape from this veranda must remind you of the sea. These white mountains are pretty big waves, however."

"Yes, yes, like the sea full enough for me, boy. Give me to stop ashore of that other sea now, till I'm done with this world and make the Jasper sea."

They sat down upon the steps of the piazza in a way that men like better than easy chairs when engaged in familiar and serious conference. The elder man plucked a stray spear of herdsgrass and began to chew it. The younger man put a match to his cigar, and began to smoke.

"You are going to quit the cigar, one of these days, Mark," remarked the captain carefully.

"I beg your pardon, sir," was the quick reply, as Mark tossed away his cigar.

"Tut, tut! You needn't do that," said the captain. "I am not going to continue nagging you about your cigar. You are old enough to judge for yourself. But it does seem to me that all the young men are smokers, now-a-days. In all my voyages I never learned it."

"So I have heard you say, sir. I would not offend you; I am not fully persuaded in my own mind about this trifle. It's not an easy thing to conquer—"

"Not easy for a boy who never had any experience in breaking off bad habits, my son. Thank God, it is the only evil habit I ever knew in you. Well, well, let's not talk of it. What a charming view this is!"

It was upon one of the lower spurs of Mt. Washington. Here, not by the sea, not by the Hudson, had Mark Broon decided to build his summer palace. Far from palace was the new house as yet, though it was habitable and made ready as best it could be for the entertainment of a happy party of down-country friends now supposed to be on the way hither.

Both gentlemen lapsed into silence in this imposing presence of nature. The morning sun rode higher up the eastern sky fresh from his bath far down the coast of Maine. The advancing day was every moment changing the stern visage of Mt. Kearsarge, by deepening or erasing the great wrinkles in the mountainous cheeks. In the distance a sheen of silver showed the ocean by Portsmouth harbor, eighty miles away as the crow flies. The intermediate landscape seemed to have no hills, no undulating line, but to be a boundless prairie in broken New England. The patchwork of forest and farm, the variety of color afforded by dark hemlocks and lighter maples, by fields mown and pastures sun-bleached, by oat stubble and white buckwheat, and this patchwork, spread by unseen hands so far and wide, was an endless study. The eye was fascinated by attempts to trace silver ribbons which were woven and plaited into the general textile, with brilliant effect. Whence came that particular water? Is it the Merrimack? And that mirror yonder, so turned towards these two observers that its sheen fairly flecked and dazzled them, after the manner of mischievous school-boys with a hand-glass, through thirty miles of distance.

The shadow of passing clouds which camped over the beetling crags above them, and then sailed out and on to intercept the sun here and there over the light-flooded plains; the sweep of a mare's tail of storm-cloud far across the harvest fields of Vermont, and actually, by means of a glass which the good captain whipped out, the hurry of hay-makers in front of the rain; the white dust puffs that marked the ashen highways, and the passing of unseen vehicles along the umbragious sides of the mountain; all these they saw, and in a quiet way each pointed out from time to time some new discovery.

"I say, bub," and the Captain's great crooked forefinger indicated the direction, "I can hear, every now and then, the music of the mowing machines, I do believe, from the Connecticut meadows."

"Certainly, father. It is the wind which brings it. I see," pulling out his watch, "that it is about time for the up trains over these two railroads. I have frequently heard the long, low rumble of the passing cars more than fifteen miles away."

"Yes," said Captain Broon, "there she puffs, on the Passumpsic road. It looks like a snake.

Ah, boy, how small a thing is a man! In yonder train are, now, let us suppose, several hundred gay and happy beings; yet you cannot see a face. Ants are a good comparison. Only God is great, Mark, only God! How often I have thought of this at sea, a ship, hull down, staggering on before my vision."

The sincere old man ran on in this strain of noble thought. He was so pure a soul that his boy might have seen his every bosom thought and never known a shock to filial reverence. It was by such unbosomings of a rare, manly nature that he had contributed more than is common, in this world of strangers, to fashion the boy's character. Mark never disturbed the flow of this sort of vocal meditation from his sire's heart. He simply sat and listened, and took every word for law and gospel; which indeed it was, measured by even the Book of the changeless law and the priceless gospel.

"I like this, Mark. Do you know, boy, in the presence of great Nature I feel myself a man again! An old sailor is at odds among crowds of men, sharp business men, on shore. In New York, for instance, they run round me. They are too quick for me, and get the advantage of me. I have to hold tight to the salt

money, or they would soon make you a beggar, Mark. Ah, a sailor only feels himself a man when on the deep! But I'm too old now. Yet here I have the same feelings as at sea. Winds, storms, clouds, waves, mountains! These are bluff, honest foes. A true man can face them and conquer. But the mean, small tricks of modern trade, and the sharpers who are abroad on shore, the storm of lies— My son, I don't know, sometimes, whether I want you to go into business at all. You'll have enough with my salt money. But you must not be idle, not be idle." And he chewed the grass spear between his lips and grew silent.

"I do not wish to be idle, father. I am not regardless of all your wishes that I should employ myself in some way to benefit mankind."

"True, boy. I know your heart. But now all that will depend not a little on the character of your proposed wife, this beautiful girl, now, that you have invited up here."

Mark Broon started. He tossed the stick that he had been whittling over the cliff at their feet, clasped his hands hard around his knees, and bent his eyes on the tree-tops, which swept away below the balcony in unbroken masses of green so far. Yonder rolled the train. His car

riage had gone down the mountains to meet the party of visitors. There was nothing to do but wait.

"You see, Mark, in my sober judgment, you lack nothing but a good wife for the making of a first-class man. Your timbers are all sound and new. Your cargo is good, — fine education, good common sense, a generous heart, and enough in the locker, and comin' to you, to keep in good repairs for a long voyage. I believe you sail by the old chart. Keep to God's Book, boy. I'm passenger now, unless you call me the shipper. But the wife is the all-important thing now. She's very fine looking; I've only seen her once or twice. But has she real good sober sense? I like a matter-of-fact girl. I like a June temper, not April. I like a religious girl, but not one who is superstitious and given to every wind that blows, Mark Why, what ails the boy? Of course it isn't what I like altogether that is to govern you. That's my way of advisin' you and thinkin' aloud. Art sick?"

The knit brows and pained looks which Mark bent on his father were such as might well betoken physical suffering; but physical it was not. Truth was, Mark Broon was keeping

his first secret from his good old sire. He had never lisped of the strange domination by Dr. Smiles, under which Laura Lane and her mother labored. He had one day started to do so, when his father's honest, matter-of-fact face forbade him, as peremptorily as if the firm lips had said, "God forbid, boy! The devil himself is in that sort of thing! Say good-bye and be done with crazy folk." The reader can judge something of Mark's present distress as his father went on again, getting to his feet before him and standing braced, sailor fashion, legs apart.

"Why, Mark, you see I can read your very soul, such friends we are. I shall love whom you love. She's passing beautiful, and will always look well alongside. I think she has a kind, good heart, for she is friendly even to the servants, I saw. You say she sails by our chart or 'tends the Congregational, which is all the same as Methodist now-a-days. I guess she's shipshape all round. I know she is — there! Come, cheer up, boy. You only want to make sure that the girl is steady on her tack; that she don't sheer off and lose her head. Why, Mark, I like a woman to sort of swear by my word, every time, thick weather or fair, to believe in me and me alone. Then, heaven wit-

ness, a man can just worship such a woman!" The old man's face caught the shadow of a passing cloud, and his fine mouth trembled as he continued, "My first wife, your mother, boy—"

"Don't, father," put in Mark.

"Well, I know," attributing Mark's protest to pathetic recollections of the dead. "But, my son, you are too much reefed to keep alongside to-day, though I don't just see why, so we'll drop it, and go in to see about these new servants and the dinner. We want our old friends, the Hardys, to eat hearty, and give the ship a good name."

As the two men strode along the wide veranda, on their left the panorama of the wide, wide world, on their right, the low, broad windows, opening into the spacious drawing-room and suit of apartments beyond, the elder man's thoughts were divided between solicitude about workmen, upholsterers and servants, and the graver theme of the morning's converse. This of itself was an evidence that the latter subject did not worry him; for with benignant content he interested himself in trifling comments upon this and that article of furniture, or proposed amendations of the building plans. When is a man with a a clear conscience happier than on a vacation

day, giving serious attention to the small affairs of his house, of play or playthings?

"I suppose now," remarked the captain, pausing before the wonderful vista revealed through the library windows, "that most of these shrewd landsmen would say I'd better set my boy to makin' more money in some business, than to humor his 'sthetic fancies, just out of college—"

"By making him as happy as man can be on earth, pa?"

It was the plain, gentle wife who spoke, as she drew near from her bustling survey of the morning's house-keeping affairs. She was a much younger lady than the captain's oft-mentioned "first wife" would have been had she lived to walk beside him till now; but it was evident at a glance that nothing but love was ever known between these three.

Mark kissed her good morning with the first smile he had worn for the last hour.

"Well, Mary," the captain began in reply, putting his stout arm around her, "it is no secret between us that Mark will have money enough. He will be rich. What is the sense, before Heaven, in settin' the boy to makin' more money for his life-work? Can anybody explain why I should urge him into business to

get richer? I know that's the fashion. These money-grubbers want their sons to succeed and do something in the world; and by that they mean money-grubbin' like their own. Why, Mark, I wouldn't do it! Sail for another port and give other poor Jacks a chance. Hey?" And again the glorious laugh which shook the man and shook the floor.

It was purely a safety-valve laugh, provoked by no joke, but letting off the surcharged good cheer and good-will of this great heart.

"Another port it shall be, father," responded Mark, his face lighting up a little, "only we can't quite make out where-away on the chart, as you would say, and decide in a general sort of way that I am not going to live for money-making."

"Right! Settle it!" roared the captain.

"But while caring for my own, I will diligently seek to use it for the welfare of my kind, and find happiness and employment in such seeking."

"Right! Though you want to figure that down a little more to a point," again roared the good captain.

"Exactly, father. That's it. It is easy enough to say I'll avoid sordid money-getting — being

rich enough — " this with a sly twinkle of the eye towards the sensible Mrs. Broon, — " but just how or where to work best and sensibly for the good of humanity is not so easy to say."

" Stay ! " quickly exclaimed the bright little lady of the trio. " I know you two men like a book. I'll tell you just what kind of a man you are to be, Mark Broon. You are to join elegant leisure with philanthropy. You are to entertain scholars, artists, writers, clergymen, and all that like, except actors and actresses, whom your father abominates."

" Right, shipmate," said the captain, in dead earnest.

" You are to adorn your life with every good and beautiful thing that money can buy, except that you will not amble in Vanity Fair."

" Right, shipmate ! Confound the fashionables ! "

" You are to be no idler, but very busy with noble errands. If you copy pa " — she always gave the captain this quaint title, — " you will spend half your time going to cheer up some sick friend, helping some poor soul whom nobody else would help, and doing it in a way that nobody else would think of. You will be

pursuing and scotching some popular error; running a tilt with some one of the thousand abuses and wrongs that afflict mankind."

"Right all the while!" growled the captain, all radiant with laughter ready to break out. "Open their eyes! Save any fellow you can from being victimized by sharpers and adventurers! Fight for the under dog all the way through life!"

"And this good man," the lady continued, "expects you to be very ingenious in inventing plans of philanthropy. Now all this is to be because pa thinks commercial and society life among the rich to-day are, for the most part, sordid, selfish, frivolous. You are to show what a high-minded Christian rich man can be, do and enjoy in the world."

"Right to a logarithm!" This the captain.

"And I predict," she concluded, releasing herself with a mischievous smile, "that our dear boy will not find it easy to live so very differently from others of his class. Excuse me; I hear the coach-horn just below the cliffs." And she broke off her half-serious banter with a laugh, and darted away.

The captain, with a puzzled look on his smiling face, which deepened into an aspect of

gravity, as if he knew how true that parting shot was, turned away, saying:

"I'll go down to see about the gravelling, Mark. We want room enough for a carriage to wear round without tipping over."

As Mark was left alone he almost groaned aloud. He recognized in the Lane household, under the domination of Dr. Smiles, a problem for a knight, directly in his own path.

"My father would not have the patience of a moment with such strange people. Smiles and my father are as darkness and light to each other. And the idea that I should entertain a fancy for a lady who would exchange two words with such a pretender, would be to him intolerable! But does she? No; I candidly judge no. It is all her mother's affair."

He walked up and down the veranda many times, and more than once exclaimed aloud:

"It is all her mother's infatuation!"

Or, again, "No, of course I couldn't marry any but a Christian woman. Not a heathen in this Christian age! A believer in necromancy! A believer in nothing!"

Or, again, with a look of a fine dreamer, yet sensible, on his upturned face, "To live wisely and well with a prayerless wife? I am not so

silly as to attempt it. Yet, said she not that I should teach her what to believe? Oh, the majestic creature, what a pupil! I cannot wonder at these fungus growths of misbeliefs in a region of such grotesque fears and lethargic churches. When she is in S——, for of course she visits there, she is in a healthier atmosphere, I trust. I wonder what Mayor Hardy's religious convictions are. But they cannot be anything akin to the Smiles folly; for my father would not have acknowledged such a man as an acquaintance, much less an old friend. He would have protested against my inviting the Hardys up here. Said they were once shipmates and old skipper captains together. Fortunate, was it not?"

When, observing by his watch that he had little time to dress for receiving his friends, he stepped rather more cheerfully down the hall and sought his room.

The reader may judge of the resolute purpose which Mark Broon was decided on, regarding Laura Lane, by the fact that he had carried the arrangement of this visit to his new house for a week with no little trouble.

He had planned his father's visit. His stepmother was to have passed the summer at the

new mansion, as the scheme was formed long ago. But how to get Laura and her mother there for guests? Fortunately, as he had said, he discovered his father's acquaintance with Mayor Hardy, Laura's uncle. Old Capt. Broon fell readily enough into the plan; it would be perfectly proper, as an assistance in social investigation concerning his son's possible future wife. The mayor and his family were even now on the approaching train.

Mark's coachman was to drive down to the valley farm in the early morning for the widow Lane and her daughter Laura.

"Yes?" Laura had laughingly questioned with a coy movement of the shapely head, and a hesitating glance, when Mark had proposed the visit a week before. "And is it to be a real visit, with certain necessary trunks and fixings?"

"Just the same," Mark had answered, "as if our dwellings were a thousand miles apart." He spoke gravely; his serious demeanor contrasted singularly with her sunny air.

"You are eccentric. How grave you are about this! I don't like you to be odd. Mamma is — is so unnatural, so unearthly much of her time," and she gave a little shudder as her face grew sedate, "that I like you to be natural."

"A thousand pardons!" he exclaimed, looking up brightly. "Now this visit is natural enough, when you come to look at it," and he began to toy with the handle of her sunshade as they stood there under the protection of the maple at her gate. "Your relatives turn out to be intimate friends of ours. My father, in his hearty way, has invited them up here. Your cousin Madge, their daughter, is with them—"

"She is a real rogue, and so jolly!"

"And they always come to the mountains about this season," he insisted on pursuing.

"I dare not tell you, Mr. Broon, what she said about you," exclaimed Laura, knowing well the art of prolonging the conversation.

But Mark kept to his argument.

"You must remember that my house-warming does not seem to take well among my curious neighbors. They will not let me get very near them; and this home party is to do in its stead."

"She said," persisted the charming obstructionist, "that she half mistrusted your invitation. A sort of convenience, their presence."

"I protest that it is not! Father often has Mr. Hardy over to dine in New York."

"But still your father does want to get ac

quainted with — that is, I mean he wants to see more — " and she tried to disengage the sunshade from his hand. Her great eyes almost challenged him for a moment.

" Of you? Why, yes," Broon answered frankly. " But you will not, you of all persons I say, think the less of me for my filial respect. And, on the other hand, you will meet my father. Mrs. Broon, my step-mother, has returned your call."

" Yes, yes," responded the girl. " Why, certainly it is all right." And she surrendered the sunshade handle to his reaching hand heartily.

IV.

A SHOCKING LIE.

"REALLY, Laura," sighed Mrs. Lane languidly, "you must send word up to—well, address it to your uncle Hardy,—no, telegraph up to Mr. Broon himself; he has a private wire from the village. Say that I am too much indisposed to go to Eaglecroft this afternoon."

The lady was reclining in a huge rocker which occupied a good half of the little front porch, or "stoop," of her dwelling. She was already dressed for the visit, except her bonnet.

Laura was ready, even to her hat and gloves. The two trunks were packed and waiting for the farm wagon which should take them, "after the men had finished cultivating the corn." All day long Laura had been half-expecting just this word from her mother's lips; expecting it at that morning's breakfast table, and it almost came, but not quite; expecting it during the forenoon, as the workman in charge came to the

widow for his week's orders, and her mother had said:

"How can you get on, haying almost here, without me?"

But the farmer, catching a glance from Laura, had managed to smooth over that objection. Laura had expected her mother's change of mind as they packed up, and had the more swiftly performed that duty largely herself. She expected a retreat as they began to dress, and her tongue ran so glibly on every conceivable subject, by way of occupying the maternal mind, and diverting it, that by the time the dressing was completed, the girl had exhausted all her ingenuity, and the last diverting theme, namely, whether it were best to sell certain railway bonds, which the family lawyer regarded with suspicion. The bond question had availed, however, being a knotty one, and the widow was dressed at last, thanks to the bonds.

"Why, at this late moment?" exclaimed Laura, ready to cry with vexation and the heat. "The carriage will be here shortly. And, mamma dear, because I chanced to mention how busy all our men were and our horses, Mr. Broon so kindly offered to send his team for us. We cannot return the vehicle empty."

Laura was still aglow with the exertion and bustling about; she was vexed, impatient, and generally in that discommoded state into which getting dressed under difficulties on a hot day plunges the sweetest-tempered woman. And she was, moreover, fully aware how hopeless was every endeavor to change her mother's mind. Yet she seated herself quietly, confronting the widow, and tried to smile with filial obedience, as she pinched the finger tips of her unbuttoned glove.

"I know, daughter," resumed Mrs. Lane. "Mr. Broon has been very kind. We will go to-morrow or some day this week. The heat is too severe on me. Why, love, here it is the last week in June; our very hottest weather, often, in the whole season! And, besides, I must, before I go, see Dr. Smiles once more. He was here last night, you remember, and he advised me, almost, against going up into the cool winds and nights of that mountain top. He is to leave the village himself to-morrow; his family are, possibly, to come up and stay at the Notch. He wished me to go down there, for a little change."

She looked hard at her daughter as she spoke. All day long the elder lady had been

trying to get up the courage to make this communication. It came at last desperately.

"Mamma Lane!" exclaimed Laura, with face wreathed in unreal smiles, but with tones really grave, "and your own brother a guest and friend up there? With auntie and Madge at Eaglecroft, and you — and I, for of course I must go where you do — down at one of the Notch hotels, the world would indeed then say that we were gone crazy, quite! And, mamma, you know already how cordially uncle Phil dislikes this physician. You remember how last winter, down at S——, he almost forbade—"

"Yes, yes, I know," was the indolent yet not altogether unalarmed reply. "We will go to-morrow. Send word that it shall be to-morrow, dear child. In fact, I was to send a messenger to the dear doctor if we did leave our house to-day; otherwise he was to call after tea. I have sent no word."

Laura stood for a moment apart, with her back to her mother, and drumming on the big fluted column that supported the stoop, her foot patting the floor, quite often the manner of any only and spoiled child. Then she surveyed herself ruefully, with many a feminine idea concerning the new travelling suit, which, like all

her dresses, was partly her own work, and partly the product of Cousin Madge Hardy's city dressmaker, generally planned during the winter's visit.

Disappointment is a youthful experience; our maturity and our age know little of its keenness. Youth and a trifle on which the heart was set and disappointed, that is the bitterness. We once lamented a holiday adjourned more than in after years our ship that never came to land. And then, too, life was so indescribably dull of late to Laura here on the farm. She often asked herself why, for it had not seemed so a year ago. But worst of all, what would Mark Broon think of them now? How rude, actually uncivil we are. Or, we can only save ourselves by assigning the real reason, mamma's subserviance to this dreadful man; which will seem worse to the Broons than incivility. I will give no reason! No, no; that will never do, even for women, who may often do a thing because they wish to; for uncle Phil would claim a kinsman's right to be angry. I must say just why. This in her thought; not for her mother's ears of course.

Then she turned sharply round and began, as she kissed her mother and stroked her gray hairs:

"Mamma dear, you know full well that I shall be good, and give up cheerfully. You are all I have to care for in the world. I often say that to myself. I could die for you, mamma. I will cheerfully adjourn the visit till to-morrow. I am sure I'm not very good; but I will be faithful to my mother!"

This was getting to be serious; evidently a prelude to something a long time intended to be said. The girl was still glowing. The listener was gazing in astonished expectancy.

"But, mamma," Laura resumed fervently, "why cannot we free ourselves from this curious doctor and his hateful influence over us? To be sure, he can make a table tip, but what religion is there in that? He can produce his spirit rappings, but, while I can't explain them, I'm sure there is no power of a good and holy God in such mean tokens. God has spoken with thunders and revealed himself in the lightning, but I cannot believe he communicates with us in these silly and yet fearful knockings! Oh, I wish I believed as other people do; I mean, as the good clergyman and respectable people, and uncle Phil and Madge and auntie and — and Mark Broon do!"

"My dear child," sighed the mother, "I almost

wish we did too. But in any event, you cannot deny that the doctor works some remarkable cures by spiritual influences. See! there they come now."

At this moment the doctor's carriage whirled up the little ascent just below the house and made straight on, as if to pass, when, as if the doctor had casually caught sight of the two ladies, the horses were pulled up in sudden halt. The doctor alighted in the dust of the road, to keep up the seeming of an unexpected visit, and he picked his way to the gate, as his son turned slowly in towards the post.

"Good evening, ladies," said he. "What a glorious hour!"

The sunbeams were falling across the earth in great golden bars of dust, and evening damps made truly glorious by his descending rays.

"You see I waited for you," said the widow smiling.

Laura had flown away to dispatch the inimitable message to the Broons; not by telegraph, but by horse, which would intercept and turn back the carriage.

"Oh, she has only a note to write," explained Mrs. Lane, referring to the vanishing Laura.

"You did right, did right," said the healer,

bowing in a lordly way, and seizing the patient's hand without ceremony. "High, very high, your temperature!" Then with a quick and sliding grasp at her wrist, "Very quick! one hundred! Come straight in!"

His iron grasp left her no discretion, had she not been instantly and strangely obedient to his command. She was led like a child into the library that opened off the hall. She was compelled into a great arm-chair, a chair which she had kept in its place of honor, and never, till this shrewd necromancer had induced her, had she occupied that chair since her good man died. With what superstitious fears had she first sunk into it, all limp and shaking, when the healer had so commanded? Even now to sit there was to be subjugated, instantly, by a mystic entrancement.

"Thus again enthroned for his visit!" exclaimed the doctor, as he stood at full height before the widow, and gazed reverently over his left shoulder at a life-sized crayon of the departed Lane, above the mantle. Then clasping hands before the portrait he addressed an invocation to it, saying, "Come, thou spirit departed! Thine is the power to heal her whom thou yet ownest as thy fond wife; mine it is to lift the

latch, as it were, for thy return, no more." And much more, delivered in a peculiar mixture of grandiloquence and meekness hard to describe.

A woman of strong affections, to whom the dead man had been almost an idol, to whom there had been no other world than this world till her idol faded from it, and she stood turned to stone, asking of the sky and clouds and Book, "Whither." How she had wept and read that book which tells of the other world! She, who had scarcely ever thought to turn its pages before. And, as is not unusual under such circumstances, to read and seek a too liberal meaning in its fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, and its "Revelation" almost drove her mad. She read it to follow a man, and not her God. What a terrible five years had she passed! The farm, whose praises were in all mouths? Why, when she began to breathe and live again, after that period of stony madness, it was the farm alone that saved her from self-destruction. To do with it, their only paradise, as he had planned to do; to execute and achieve each proud hope and dream of his; to see him in every field, on every hill-side, and to accustom herself to the thought that *he saw her*,

was indeed ever watching her. She used to talk with him, as she thought, when alone. She actually adored him in her evening prayers. If she mentioned the name of God, it was only because she felt that it might somehow be necessary for her audience with her dead one. She believed now in heaven; but it was a heaven of her own furnishing, as truly as her dwelling was. It might have contained a Ruler, but Him she never saw as a Christian sees Him. She had abandoned the reading of those scriptures which so confused her complaining heart. She accused the volume which tells us more how to live in this world than it gratifies a curiosity about the next. She had taken to reading the many strange books which stocked her husband's well filled library; at first more because he had thumbed and marked them than because she could understand them, but after a little, since she was of a bright mind it should be said, becoming curious, interested, speculative, and credulous of their hard incredulities. I tell you all this, reader, that you may the better understand how she so readily became a victim to this conjurer of "familiar spirits."

Smiles had now seated himself with eyes closed and arms folded. The twilight shadows began

to thicken in the room and the mystic whispers of leaves in the evening breeze came through the window. All was expectancy. The unearthly visitor would enter, doubtless, at any moment. The lady had surrendered herself completely to the dear anticipation. Imagination, that immeasurably strong and to us all at best an unknown faculty, held her in complete and willing thrall. If she heard the younger Smiles' remark to Laura in the next room, whither he had followed her, "Will you allow me to open the piano? it is long since I have heard your divine voice," in Mrs. Lane's ears it was as an echo from another world.

If she heard Laura's reply, "I cannot think of disturbing mamma with music on occasion of your father's professional services with her," this, too, was as unreal as voices in a dream. Poor soul, she was all eyes and ears for her spectral visitor! She has yielded herself to this one figment of her own brain till she would not have regarded it had a straying vagabond from the highway entered and laid thieving hands on anything in the room. Hence, when the doctor at length remarked, "He comes! Hark! His rap!" the lady, with a sudden spring, exclaimed, "Yes, I hear! It is he. He comes!" and from

her chair she watched IT, as she leaned forward, reaching out pathetic welcome with her trembling hands.

IT might have been the creation of the shadows that were flung across the moon-flecked lawns and in at the wide old doors; shadows that were fitful because of passing clouds, which pushed their silver heads up over the trees presaging summer thunder later in the night. IT might have been the branching vines that swayed and beckoned like so many arms outstretched and which tossed their counterparts upon the pretty papered walls. IT undoubtedly was some one of these mere incidents of peaceful twilight, to healthy minds like charms unspeakable; to hers the tokens of the supernatural, which furnished her visitor his expedients on this occasion. There was always some slight external expedients necessary to the doctor; though his greatest helper was the patient's own diseased imagination. He preferred evening consultations; the nerves are more excitable when weary at the day's close. He generally came here about twilight. In his own office at S—— he had many appliances of darkened rooms, a throne for himself, etc. At the hotel his ingenuity was put to severe test. But your deceiver is always ingenious; his inventive

power should have tempted him to legitimate uses and a legitimate livelihood. They might have produced a telephone. Remember, moreover, that even the sick are ready to be deceived.

And now there came to this willing victim of her maddening and unsanctified bereavement visions as fantastic as those of opiate dreams. They emerged to her, at the wand-like motions of this man's finger, out of the gloom.

A bust of Shakespeare, over the book-cases, moved its eyes to her! An antique shield on the wall palpitated like the moving breast of a breathing creature. She saw blood stains on the tips of the spears which were crossed behind the shield.

The room suddenly grew awful in a brilliant light, no doubt, for she withdrew her outstretched hands for an instant to shade her eyes. Then, as quick a change, no doubt to inky darkness, for she groped and felt about with waving hands.

A pile of engravings in the corner became a hundred portraits; of her husband in different postures; of her only other child, a son lost in his fair babyhood: of her own parents and other kin, gone into the Unseen, years ago. "Companion spirits," softly whispered Smiles at a venture, shrewdly guessing at her delirium.

"Yes, yes," sighed the victim.

At which confirmation of his sharp conjecture, her visitor took up the tale of their biographies; he dealt in such generalities as could not be far amiss of the lives of parents, husband, child and friend.

She thought she saw that huge, old fashioned center-table, relic of the Mayflower days and heirloom, stand poised upon one of its claw-carved legs, and stretching out another leg, stalk like a great fowl across the library! All its movable burdens rode in safety! The pen did not fall from the inkstand's side. The ink was unspilled; and she was conscious of no housekeeper's solicitude for the scarlet coverlet! I have heard her tell these things, years away. Even yet she shudders at the memory; and, as she halts in the narrative, turns to her auditors with:

"Explain it; can you?

"It was all in your mind. Or, may be it is not yet explained scientifically; but it will yet be. After all, what religion was there in that?"

"True enough. And yet—"

But you are supposed to be in that room, a spectator, my reader, years ago.

"Are we administering the proper medicines?" asked the doctor. "If so, please rap twice."

Did you not hear the double knock?

"Is my great work worthy of all encouragement and effort? If so, give the triple token."

Did you not hear the three sharp signals?

"Will you guide my hand in writing a message?"

Smiles whipped out a tablet and stretched his limp, quiescent hand upon the table.

For a long time there was no response. This silence, this waiting, this eager expectation of a voice from that voiceless world! This concentration of strained faculties upon unearthly and unnatural hopes! Every tick of the great clock in the hall was like a hammer stroke. How heavy is the footfall of Time when one gives his whole hearing thereto. One ceases to wonder that such footsteps shake down the hills and grind proud temples to dust. A year is nothing. We are too finite to appreciate it. It is an hour, here and there in life, that reveals to us what Time is. It is occasional heavy and slow-stepping moments that overwhelm us; they are weightier than years.

All of which this cold philosopher knew well. He waited by the moment. The great clock was now holding the whole house in awe. At least there was no more sound from the dining-room beyond,

where Erastus and Laura sat, than from the library.

At last this old conjurer broke the spell by saying:

"It moves me; I write."

Oh, it was all vulgar enough. The old and earliest paraphernalia and methods of a deception which, no doubt, in later years, has learned newer and more brilliant methods. But it was, and is ever, the same old lie. I am describing it as it was seen twenty years ago in New England. Visions, table-tippings, rappings, and "communications from the spirit world." And it "deceived many," even as the Christ had mournfully foretold it should "in later and perilous times."

The next step was, of course, to call in his son and her daughter — if he could rely on the young lady's quiet assent as a witness and unprotesting,— read the handwriting and pronounce this day's work done. The doctor's long forefinger now pointed to the room where the young people sat. His lips did not move; his extended arm kept its sustained gesture. A moment seemed to the staring widow an hour, a year, an age. She grew amazed that mortal flesh could so long support the weight of an extended arm.

"Oh, spare the child, doctor!" The widow gasped it.

She understood the finger. But she had grown strangely unwilling to involve her daughter deeper in "the mysteries" that had of late seemed to cast such gloom and terror over the fair young life. Still she had never got the strength to protest till now. The struggle was like a convulsion. Poor soul!

The finger, however, was relentless. Ages wore swift on before the widow's crazy vision. The finger was pointing still. Then the mother yielded.

"L — La — Laura!"

The quavering voice of her call was heart-breaking in its anguish. It was one of those unnatural vocal sounds that we all have heard from the parted lips of a troubled sleeper, the nightmare cry.

"Laura,— L — L — Laura!"

And the effect of this cry, as it penetrated into the next room, falling upon the affectionate daughter's ears? Well, we must make allowances. This was not the first time — Heaven pity the child! — that she had heard such tones from her mother, "while undergoing treatment." And yet, there was something so unusual in this present

instance, so terrorizing to the ears of affection, that, with a spring, Laura Lane flew towards the door.

"Oh, mamma, mamma!"

But she did not cross the threshold; she stood upon it, with hands clasped in front of her, with eyes dilated, with lips parted, yet, after her ejaculation, uttering no sound. The pointing finger of the conjurer confronted her. The death-like pallor, the ghastly stare of her mother's face and eyes were shocking. She had no power to move forward, till Erastus, quickly at her elbow, offered to assist her.

"But — but I cannot enter that room!" she exclaimed pleadingly, with a turn of her head towards the young man.

"It is indeed an outrage to force you there!"

This from his lips, which were close to her ear, and in subdued yet vehement utterance. To his honor be it said the hot blood of indignant affection was flushing his features.

"Oh, sir, I thank you," quickly responded the girl, at the same time grasping his arm with both her hands, and for the first time in all their acquaintance manifesting anything like interest in him with the eyes she turned full to meet his own. "Let us go out at the side door; I am

faint!" And she clung to the arm she had embraced as if for refuge.

"Erastus, my son!" solemnly spoke the doctor.

"Well, sir!"

It was decidedly defiant. All the chivalry in the young fellow's soul was bestirring itself. Yet he paused, for all that, midway of his second footstep towards the proposed side door.

"Well, indeed!" was the doctor's rejoinder, while his pointing finger began to vibrate. Every motion of the finger seemed to deride his sudden resolution of rebellion. The finger bent its first joint and then straightened itself again. The motion seemed a warning. The finger caught itself on the arc of the thumb and then snapped itself out again; there was all the unspeakable contempt of conscious power in his little movement.

The young man changed from chivalric red to craven white. He looked down, after all his high glancing. He bit his lip. He obeyed.

"Come, Miss Lane, let us go in with our parents. I will accompany you."

If he had only known how near he this once came to winning at least her respect, respect without which surely there can be no love!

"I might have known," she stammered out in

a helplessness that I cannot explain, "that you would not dare disobey that — that man, even to save a woman's reason!"

Erastus Smiles but shut his teeth hard together, and began to release her arm from his own, at the same time stepping behind her as if he fully expected her to precede him into the little parlor.

The two young people entered the room, Erastus taking a seat, Laura standing just within the doorway, her blue eyes staring, flashing, had there been light to see them. She had never witnessed such extent of audacity in their visitors before; and this of itself alarmed her. She had, moreover, of late begun to regard the whole affair as bordering on sacrilege, thanks to Mark Broon's unmistakable, though but occasional, utterances. Yet recollect, reader, that she had been literally trained with no religious faith whatever.

And now the finger dropped to the doctor's side.

"I am to read you the advice from another world." he began. "It is obscure, yet the wayfaring man may not err therein."

Reading: "*Let everything favor him.*"

Smiles paused impressively, and looked around with a mien that asked, "To whom can that apply but my benignant self?"

Reading: "*As all good men, in these later years, now share their goods, in some portion, with the suffering in the world they leave behind at death, I regret that I gave naught to benevolence in my last will and testament.*"

Another impressive pause.

Reading: "*It is not yet too late.*"

"Not too late?" eagerly asked the widow.

"Mamma! mamma!" protested Laura, unable to longer keep her silence. Yet such was the sway of that mad hour, so utterly undefended was this beautiful girl by any counter and true belief, so boundless was her loyalty of love for her mother, who seemed that moment like one enraptured and ecstatic, that, at a mere motion of her mother's hand, she stayed her own advancing foot and stilled her indignant tongue.

"So readeth it: 'not yet too late,'" reiterated Smiles.

"Tell me how!" shrieked the widow, springing to her feet. "If it be our money, was it not all his? If the gift of it will ease his soul, give free, blessed sir! I'll bestow all my — his goods to feed the poor! If it be this home, why, sir, say to him that all the trooping sick shall come and stock their crutches in this yard till they pile as high as in the days of Galilee!

Oh, I have read in his books of late how monks and nuns were willing to turn beggars in old times, surrendering princely estates and palaces to obey a creed outworn. Shall not I do as much at the call of the new? Take pen, sir! Take pen! Oh, thank you."

She flung herself wildly upon her daughter's neck. A paroxysm of weeping now came to the relief of those surcharged nerves. The dutiful daughter caught her little mother in a tender and strong embrace of rescue. The man Smiles was busy writing now at the table. He had gone far enough; perhaps further than he had intended. Indeed, he might have detected as much in the alarmed face of his amazed and shaking son.

"Sir!" exclaimed Laura, "you are cruel and wicked if you do not help me convey her to her room."

"No, daughter," faintly whispered the mother, with an effort, standing erect and beginning to move away. "I am quite able to walk. Oh, what an hour! The opening heavens! Bring me the writing!"

"Never, mamma, never!" cried Laura. "He — they — neither of these two impostors —"

"Girl!" cried Smiles the elder, advancing to-

wards her, "how dare you! The room is full of supernal visitants! It was your father's command which I read! And I did not read it all; there is a line for you. It reads: '*And let not my daughter separate her lot from these things.*' My son," and he turned towards Erastus, who still kept silence be it said to his shame, "will explain further to you. You assent? You are silent. Now go with your mother, like a good girl. Another day we shall know better our next step."

Such was the audacity of the man, such the peculiar power of his vulgar daring that this girl stood speechless, her face like marble in the moonbeams, that entered as the only light, for not a lamp had been touched, though it was now quite night darkness; stood matchless in the silver glow, a creature all fears, all dismay, all suffering, all helplessness; yet so awe-inspiring in her defenselessness, shielding her mother there in the wide doorway, that both these men gathered themselves together and stole away without another word.

There be spoilers of your goods, who break in to rob your house; there be also robbers of the mind, like these. I tell no tale with the common plot of defenseless women and vulgar burg-

lary, but worse: a theft of all sound faith, sound hope, sound mental state.

Of that night's after hours I have never dared ask a narrative. The sobbing of the sea which succeeded such a tempest; the wildness, the incoherent cry of pleasure and of pain incongruously commingled; the abject misery of the daughter, ministrant to a mother not insane, yet almost. The medicines of words, of tears, of lavings, of home decoctions, and, first and last, of caresses. The sleeplessness as the short June night was changed too quick to somber twilight of the dawn again. And when the elder one grew calm at length, the younger one was needy of her soothing, all in turn.

The sense of shame, with apprehensions! What had they written? Had they written anything? Had they signed anything? The gray light of morning making the dear old home hateful in the younger lady's eyes. Plans and counter-plans for the morrow. Should they go? Had they strength? Yes, yes. Laura was sure they had strength for flight. Had they strength for maskings hour by hour after they should come beneath those kind and yet searching eyes at Eaglecroft? They could not tell.

But evening would tell. Meanwhile, to sleep.

A closed blind, a strange, unwonted stillness all around the farm. Servants with slippered feet creeping about and whispering. Bees buzzing at the vines. The afternoon sun declining all in good time. Mr. Broon's carriage. The key turned in the front of the house as if for the last time, so Laura questioned in her mind.

"We do not know when we shall return," was Laura's last word to the servant. "The farmer will come up to Eaglecroft if he wishes to consult us."

"What could you mean?" asked Mrs. Lane, comfortably settling herself for the ride, "by saying that we do not know when we shall return?"

"I don't know," was the girl's reply.

But her gaze backward, just as the farm gable was shut out of view, had so much of dread in it, that it might have given an answer to a more critical observer.

"I have signed no papers tnat I ought not?" was another remark, later on, from the mother.

"Oh, I trust God, no!" wearily sighed Laura.

Otherwise they rode on in almost unbroken silence.

V.

HIS MOUNTAIN PALACE.

"WELL, sis," was Mr. Philip Hardy's cheery greeting, as the carriage conveying Mrs. Lane and Laura halted under the portico at Mark Broon's mountain-top lodge. "I think it is high time you brought that white face of yours away from home. I'm almost fraid to kiss it,"—he did kiss it, however, very promptly and affectionately,—"for a good breath might blow it away," patting its wan cheek. "My sister, captain," as he introduced her to Mark's father.

Between these two huge, handsome, healthy gentlemen, all laughter and banter, beaming a high-bred contentment and generous self-satisfaction towards all the world, how frail this trembling woman seemed. It being a family party largely, there was instantly a flutter of more plumage of womankind about the two gentlemen than they could make a path through. The pretty and amiable Madge Hardy, arms about

her cousin Laura, with such a profusion of greetings, all sunny as herself. The two elder ladies, hostess and guest, descending the stone steps to add themselves to the welcome. Mark Broon, on the outskirts as yet, somewhat impatiently waiting his opportunity; for, though the dwelling was his own, he always allowed his father and mother to take the lead in hospitalities, since he "was only half a man as yet, for purposes of hospitality, being bachelor."

Everything wore the happy look. The magnificent front of the superb house radiant in its fresh colors and newness, with great windows and doorways wide open to the glory of the summer's evening; a flush of the afterglow painting its tower and gables as its flag fell gracefully, dipping to the departing sun. The happy look on newly-made flower-beds and struggling young lawns; on the faces of Mark's dogs that stood wagging and grinning at his back; on the servants waiting to serve the new arrivals; on the giant maples and beeches, primeval dwellers here, and spared the ax wherever it were possible, bowing lofty courtesies; on urbane skies, bending so near, and hanging far below the curtains of fantastic cloud. Gaze which way one would, on man and beast and nature, every

where the happy look, which sometimes — who shall say it is not always, for such eyes as can see it? — this present glorious world takes on.

As they trooped into the house, the musicians, few, yet performers not devoid of taste, rendered their part of the honors. The melody invaded the chambers whither the women repaired, all helping, with obsequious hindrance of fingers and tongues, the preparation for "coming right down to the waiting dinner." And the music was from without, coming in at the windows as well, if the fickle breeze so pleased; you were tempted to the casement in little pauses of your dressing to listen, and you forgot the music in the dim, far vision over the slumbering world beneath, over which, not a score of miles away, so it seemed, there arose the evening star. You sat down on the cushioned window ledge, Laura Lane, with Madge Hardy at your hair, and chattering like a magpie, like this:

"Tell me now, coz, for mamma and I think he is just splendid!"

And then in the next breath, giving you no chance to reply:

"Papa thinks him very, very manly."

Then: "And such a glorious house!"

Then: "Yes, mamma, we are coming. Most ready."

Finally: "Why, how dull you are, child. Are you indeed so tired? It must be dreadfully dull at the farm. And poor, dear auntie, too! But you will be yourself here in an hour. No one can feel depressed here long, except when the gentlemen get to talking about this dreadful coming conflict."

"What?" exclaimed Laura, almost for the first time showing genuine interest. "Is anything else going to come upon us?"

There was something in Madge's tone, and furtive, half-affrighted glance as she spoke, that was worse than the words she had quoted from the men's conversation, "coming conflict."

"Oh, dear, I don't know," replied Madge rising up from the broad window ledge on whose crimson cushion her blue spread out so prettily. "Let me fasten your hair just a bit. They talk about a dreadful war, and all the men to be called to the front, while we poor creatures sit at home and — There! now you look charmingly. Let's go down."

But Laura stood stock still, staring at her cousin, her look of alarm returning, but only parting her lips.

"Why, coz," exclaimed Madge tugging at one arm, through which she had linked her own, and bending to kiss the affrighted face, "something must have gone quite wrong with you to-day. Or, is it the war? I felt just as shocked at first. I suppose we hear much more of it in the city than you do up here; and we were so alarmed about brother, — for fear he might get patriotic, you know. But papa called it all foolishness; said that of course some of our friends would go. You know the government has a regular army. There now, tell me, are you really so far along as to be apprehensive for him?"

"No." Very decidedly. "Of course not, you simpleton," blushing. "There, indeed! Let's go down."

Whatever else Laura had said in reply to this running fire of small talk was monosyllabic and too uninteresting to record. But the brilliant table scene wrought its charming change on every one; and it was the beginning of a charm that lasted, helping, hour by hour, the stout heart of youth and innocence to wear a look that was not all a mask. And the elder heart, of the two we are especially anxious about just now, relieved of its incubus somewhat among

these healthy people, got something of its old steadiness again, after an evening of blithe society, music and busy tidings from the outer world. The ladies actually got to talking dress, later on; while the gentlemen talked politics, in those times of momentous politics. Then there was a pairing off of such as would pace the ample veranda, "to sleep the better," as Capt. Broon explained, taking the widow upon his arm, and adding Mrs. Hardy; the ex-mayor having Mrs. Broon; and Mark with Laura and Madge.

To make the picture truthful to the last detail —and it reveals you the Broons in a word,— at the final turn on the veranda, Mark stepped through the window with his ladies, and seated himself at the organ, which was built in an alcove of the parlor.

"You will make all allowances for a half finished instrument," he explained; "but we can get something out of it. It is my father's favorite music, and, I may add, that I am of the same mind."

He was more than the average amateur performer. The evening hymn had room in the open-windowed apartment, and amid these mountain altitudes. All sung: with reverence and

gratitude, all; but from no throat so deep and heartfelt a tone as from the bronzed-faced old captain's, voicing to his God a thanksgiving for the day. And the captain was the priest of this home. His honest prayer was as his honest smile, with which, up to this sedate moment, his honest features were ever beaming.

The night was better. The next day was the best the Lanes had lived for weeks; and the added days sustained the promise of the first. Soon a week and more of these good days had run away amid such delightful employments as elude the pen, like the epoch when a nation has no history.

The visit at Eaglecroft had been already prolonged into the third week. The time had been lengthened, despite many a protest from the guests, by those extended excursions about the mountains which the reader, who has once taken them, can but remember with thrilling pleasure. It was finally agreed, this morning of which we write, that the party should not yet be broken up. The ladies should remain, while Capt. Broon and Mr. Hardy returned to the city, for a few days of business. Meanwhile, Mark was to do his best for the entertainment of so many ladies.

He had resolved to begin with Laura; and his buggy and span were at the door, immediately after the elder gentlemen had gone down to the railway station, for a drive to the Crawford House. These two alone; the glorious ride in the hopeful, gladsome morning should decide some things. So at least the young fellow resolved.

Decide some things? Yes; for nothing had been decided in the frolicsome week past,—except this: the old captain had been taken prisoner by the magnificent Laura. And Laura had joined the other "adorers" of the grand old man whom everybody loved.

"She'll do, Mark!" he had exclaimed. "She is the loveliest messmate I ever saw. And she is as honest and good as she is beautiful. Oh, what health she has, boy. Such a woman will never give her husband the blues. But isn't she just a shade sad about something, Mark?"

Truth is Laura had done marvelously well to keep her sunshine with such darkness over her path of duty. The sorest trial was her enforced dissimulation. How she prayed God for the privilege of speaking out. Yet what should she say? She loved Mark Broon. She, Laura Lane, had been true to him. But Laura Lane's lips had spoken him false. And yet it was Smiles'

lips; not hers. It was he who misinterpreted her silence, that evening. Well, why not confess that, and explain the circumstances?

Judge why not, reader, in the light of the following scene.

It was but a day or two before, on one of those majestic evenings which are only seen upon mountain tops, that the whole party had been sitting upon the broad veranda looking down upon the misty valley overarched by brilliant astral heavens. The conversation had turned upon the supernatural. Mrs. Lane had boldly taken her part in the round robin saying:

"I believe that mind may cure disease."

"Indeed, prayer blesses the means we use," promptly exclaimed the captain.

"Yes, but I have been thinking much of late of this unseen world. I believe some men have powers delegated from heaven to cure."

Her brother and Mark would have gladly changed the conversation, but she would not. She warmly returned to the topic, asserting:

"If I could afford it, I would establish a hospital in which cures should be wrought by means not generally recognized by the medical men. I—"

"Zounds, you would!" exclaimed the captain,

fairly forgetting himself. "And if I had my way I'd blow up every patent medicine shop which is stealing the wages of the poor, and drive out of the country every one of these pretenders who offer to cure by some pretended message from heaven which blasphemes the God I worship."

Of course the conversation changed then, instantly. But no one had forgotten the old captain's righteous indignation; and, least of all, Laura.

"He will never respect me as his daughter when he knows all," she thought. "In this high-minded and orthodox home how like tainted visionaries we. How, oh, my God, did we ever get entangled in such coils? But it is too late. I will tell Mark all, when, of course, he will despise me as his righteous old father would. Married to a witch and companion of magicians! He will never."

Hence it came about that, with a heart heavy with its desperate resolution, the girl came tripping, a lying vision of beauty and joy, to the waiting carriage for the Crawford House drive.

"Laura Lane," exclaimed the lover as the horses danced gaily along the drive, "you do not help me to descend these sharp hills. How

can a man drive and be looking at you?" His fine weather-colored face was fairly grave in the intensity of his happiness.

"Why, you needn't look at me, Mark," she said playfully; yet no woman could have wholly resisted that manly compliment. She felt the thrill of his admiration in every nerve. "Please look to the horses, that's a good boy," she cried in girlish banter; but the woman within her was mightily moved.

"I may at least look at you here for a moment," he responded, as they began a gentler assent, "we go up here for a little, and then down, down, and a mad whirl, all the way to the valley. Who could deny himself the pleasure of such an apparition of beauty as you seem to me?—especially if he meant to try to possess it forever."

He was all respect and deference in every tone and motion. He was almost painfully grave. His face was turned to her with that reverent gaze which she had always seen him give his father, only this was brighter. Then, too, he had some rights; she had known him, and welcomed his attentions, now these many weeks. She had encouraged him to expect this moment. Her own heart pleaded his rights. But her resolve

"Mark Broon," she said, all smiles, "you know that we are not — not engaged, and — "

"Say not so, Laura. Say that we are now and forever engaged to love and keep each other till death part us."

He stopped the horses, which put their noses up into the low hanging maple boughs, nibbling the tender leaves unforbidden.

What solid ground of plain facts we get down to, ye poets and dreamers, when the final question comes bluntly from an honest man. Such serious business, arresting romance.

Mark Broon seemed to her, for the moment, irresistible. The resolution of many hours' forming was departing on the zephyrs that fluttered her white plumes, and the under leaves of the greenwood aisles. She was dressed in white; her cheeks flushed into surpassing beauty of contrast. For a moment she could not speak, and her delicate hands toyed nervously at the ends of the silken ribbon that encircled her waist. Her eyes fell, and the drooping lids helped her, for they shut him out; but those glorious lashes worked against her purpose after all, for they inspired the man anew.

"You need not formally say yes, like the story-book girl," he exclaimed.

He had whipped off the glove from his left hand, and was searching his pocket for a ring. He had it, held it up flashing in a bar of sunshine that promptly and graciously streamed in to envelope them. Still she did not speak. Still he could have thanked kind heaven that words were not needed. Her coy silence seemed a very profusion of assent. He would have forced her hand and put the diamond on but for his right hand's grasp on the rein. He dropped the rein to do it, when Laura exclaimed suddenly:

"Stop! Heaven help me!"

He saw her lift her eyes and look past him, far off through the opening of the trees that combed the cliff at their side. The wondrous blue eyes, not tender now, but stern, or as near to stern as such kind eyes could ever be; their blue was deeper than he had ever seen it. They looked long and steadily past him, and over the tinted valley, as if fixed on the ends of the world. It was but for a moment; yet, in that moment her eyes, looking past him, and quite resolved now, had put a thousand miles, a thousand years between them.

Mark replaced the ring, and gathered up his horses without a word. The road fell sharply off. The animals felt their mettle. In silence

the light vehicle spun down and on, whirling about the front of mountain promentories, under overhanging brows of rock, with flecks of light and shadow streaming over them. Laborers looked up from their stone-breaking to wonder at her beauty, and to envy him. Toiling pedestrians paused upon their staffs to look, and vote them the happiest two souls in the mountains. The smiling vales, a thousand feet below, glanced up at them, from time to time, as if these two were glad celestials, deigning to come down to them. Yet never was a bright outer day so dark within these two young hearts.

They must have gone on in this unexplained silence for some time, each guessing at the other's thoughts. The precipitous highway and the spirited team furnished Mark sufficient occupation; his fair companion had none, unless it were to note the tremor of the frail vehicle, and think that it surely sympathized with a part, at least, of its burden.

Why had they not returned? Sure enough; instead of subjecting themselves to twenty miles of torture. Because motion was relief. Think of the torture in a chair on the veranda of Eaglecroft, or shut up in one of its chambers. Fly, fast and far, good steeds. Fly, to the ends of the world.

At length Mark turned to say:

"We have but a mile further, and we shall be at the Crawford."

As he caught sight of Laura's face, her eyes were full of tears. He was sure she had been weeping; or at any rate was ready to break down utterly under her self-imposed trial.

"Laura," he cried, bringing the horses to a walk, "have I ever been unkind to you? I will never press you for an answer nor explanation. I will only too gladly be your friend as long as we walk the earth. Forgive my rude silence. I am self-mastered now. I claim nothing. The past is all gone. I have only invited you, in a friendly way, I, your host, to drive with me. Come, speak, and say you believe me. You shall find me a gentlemen the rest of the day."

She beamed upon him, exclaiming, ardently:

"You are always a gentleman, Mark Broon! You are the noblest, truest of men!"

And she grew to look so eloquent by her distress, though her words came with stammering and the slightest little sob in the world. Who can describe it? Who has not heard it? What man ever stood up before it? That half-sob of a beautiful woman whom he loved; a

grief which was yet kept from sobbing itself out by the rush of a high-spirited discourse. She went on:

"I shall forever and forever revere you, Mr. Broon. It is only just to you that I explain; but I cannot. It is because you are so true a heart that you do not ask me to. Probably you will never know, for we must part to-day forever. But you will never doubt me, that—," and she stopped short.

That was the very point. Of course, no matter what she said, he would doubt her love sooner or later. She must live on in the consciousness that Mark believed her a girl of double dealings, who had freely encouraged the advances of two suitors.

Mark peered into the demure face a moment, as she remained silent, and then ventured, with consummate delicacy breathing in his tones:

"Do you mind telling me just what I am never to doubt, Miss Lane?"

At that moment a clatter of hoofs sounded among the loose stones and yellow mulleins of the roadside. Careless of his horse's legs and his own neck, the rider perseveringly came into as full view as if he had met them. He lifted his hat from a knobbed forehead, and made

most gracious obeisance; then regained the road, and showed heels.

"Oh, Mark!" How she revealed the secret heart by this lapse to his given name when frightened. Laura drew her fine shoulders, shrinking nearer to her escort, as if the horseman had struck her. But for all that there was something of such deep interest in the look which she now cast after the vanishing form, that of course Mark Broon misunderstood. A boy in love is always a fool at the wrong time.

"I see," flashed in his reply. "That adventurer! That liver-by-his-wits! Where's his noble sire? They hunt together, I believe, generally."

Mark cast a look behind, as did Laura also; but Dr. Smiles was no equestrian, and had not accompanied his son.

Mark Broon in silence began at once to make his misconception greater. He thought it all out in a moment or two; how this girl was "weaker than water; was a mere creature of impressions and emotions; was evidently her mother's own child, after all; and though seemingly so womanly, there was yet something physical or mental about her that had made, or would make her an easy victim to these men.

Had she not been trained in an atmosphere of oddisms and irreligion? What, then, could he expect of the neglected conscience? Thackeray and the satirists all had said that the way to make a woman love you is to abuse her; had said that the worst men storm and conquer the best women for wives. Trouble take and fly away with her! She would never be a safe wife. And yet, my God, help me! How lovely she seems to the eye!".

Laura Lane, too, built up her fortress of mistakes a little higher, and made it, in that silence, a little more insurmountable, if possible.

"Of course, they will follow us. I am not surprised. To-morrow some bird will fly to mother, and she will insist on visiting the Crawford. Her illness will return. Could Mark Broon and I ever marry and I not be called upon to abandon her, my mother, as one hopelessly enslaved? And my property involved, I am a beggar come to him! And old Captain Broon? Shall I explain, and open my heart to that dear old soul? Can I? Oh, unhappy world, in which I, such as I, am woven in like a helpless thread with vulgar sharpers and canting charlatans. If dear mamma were insane, I

would lock myself in to be her loving nurse till death. She is not insane. She is superstitious, which is worse. Mark Broon, my idol, I love thee too fondly to tie thee in this net of rogues and hypocrites. And thou canst not understand, I see."

At the conclusion, a drop of anger distilled into her cup of grief and love; the effect of which is, not to help us to repent, but to be stout-hearted in a perverse course. Pique has often masqueraded in the guise of conscience.

And yet Laura could not endure the thought of being judged a flirt. She must resume the conversation; she must at least indicate to him, if she could not bring herself to reveal all the shame of her own complication with the two pretenders, that she was convinced of the incompatibility of her own and Mark's religious training. She laid her hand on the lines as a hint, and Mark drew up his horses under a convenient shade, the Crawford being in full view.

"I — I want you to — to understand that I am afraid to marry you," which was such a distraught expression, and did not convey her meaning at all.

Mark looked at her in blank dismay.

"That is," she hastened to resume, "even if

I were perfectly free to — to marry — to receive your attentions. What I mean is, suppose the husband loved his Bible, and the wife only tolerated it; suppose one preferred the prayer-meeting, and the other thought it inexplicably uninteresting and dull; suppose the man's very soul was easily moved by "Jesus, lover of my soul," and the woman's soul felt no answering thrill from the hymn that could compare for a moment with that of *Il Trovatore;* suppose that in his trials he was helped by a miraculous faith, but she was ever hindered by a sensuous doubt; suppose the man loved Sunday for worship, and the woman preferred it for play; suppose you, Mark Broon, feared what I dared, and dared what I feared — Oh, my glove!"

In gesticulating, with charming feminine nervousness, the girl had flirted to the ground the glove with which she was toying.

"Of course," cried Mark, and he was out of the vehicle to recover it. "You wonderful woman, I protest. You are not made for augument. What could I fear that you would dare?"

"The displeasure of your unseen Saviour, for instance."

He pushed his straw hat from his brow and

stood there regarding her without reply; but a look of inexpressible pain fell over his youthful face, beclouded in the summer's day. Then, with eyes cast to the ground:

"And what dare, that you would fear?"

"Death, for instance."

"Don't talk of death, we are so young," he protested.

It was her turn to stare in surprise.

"Why, I thought you—I thought pious people were always ready to die!"

"Yes, ready; but not preferring. The sick, the broken, the weary and the aged may prefer to go; but not the young and hopeful, to whom life is joyous duty. The good Book says 'To live is Christ,' a mighty predicate. St. Paul used the largest, fullest word which he knew in all language to express what life was to him, old and solitary man though he were. It is a climax when he adds, 'but to die is gain.' That is, departure is, to the Christian, when God calls, more than even the grandest life can be; more than the word Christ, used adverbially could tell. The Christian's death has no similitude with which earthly language can express itself. It is simply more than Christ-living on earth."

Mark spoke with a simple eloquence which, like the purest, loftiest eloquence always, is only possible with an audience of one, and that one the supreme object of your earthly love.

"Oh, pity me!" cried Laura. "Do you not see that we have none of these grand ideas in common? Our joys would be one only in the mere fringe and hem; but the wide breadths and beautiful texture of life's joy would be different for each of us. If we had sorrows, you would pray, but I would not. I should hear you pray for me; but you would never hear me pray for you: I do not know how. You should have a wife named Faith; for I think the Christian life is heroic. It must be hard enough to live it, on that high plane," and her eyes wandered dreamily up towards the crowning heights above them, "when each helps the other. But when one hinders —"

"Stop! Oh, Laura," he exclaimed, seizing her hand over the arm of the seat, "I will teach you all this!"

"You cannot. It is too late!"

"If I cannot, God can and will. And may he forgive me for boasting that I could do it! Laura, it would need but some great shock, some startling call of awful duty, to open the

heart, in such a state of searching for the truth as now is on your young life, to awaken your faith in God. I believe, if these mountains were now to begin to tremble with the crack of doom, that you, with me, would be among those who wait for their Lord; yes, and never, thereafter, to be separated.

"If you were called to heaven, now," and her trembling lips made sweetest music of the saying, "I should never leave off looking and longing towards the clouds that hid you."

Instantly he was at her side in the vehicle; he took her two hands, while the flecks of sunlight through the maples seemed laughter over the twain.

"Look with me into life like that, Laura. For, God is my witness, that I forsee that I am about to find life full of trials from this day!"

"What do you mean?"

"I can't tell. I think the day of Judgment must be near."

"Is it the war?"

"Would you give me a tear if I went?"

"Yes, and a—," but she paused.

"Prayer?"

Like a flash it came, and he was exultant with hope in an instant.

"Don't go! Oh, God help me not to drive you to that! Promise me!"

All our women at the North spoke like that at first, those days. Our grandfathers never knew such passionate love from women as the war evoked for the men of our generation. At mention of the war, each affrighted woman opened a door in her heart so wide that the hinges were almost broken, and, thrusting him in to the inner keep, hid the man she loved, were it father, husband, brother or suitor; then she shut and bolted the doors. This, I say, at the first.

Mark Broon read his hope. It might have been pushed to a plighted troth even then, but that they were halting directly in the roadway of the many tourists, who, by this hour of the day, were wandering down towards the Flume,—and among them Erastus Smiles!

There was nothing to do but drive on now to the hotel, — unless in a whirlwind of repentance she was ready to cry, "Ask me again." But Erastus Smiles bowed.

Laura Lane's confused conscience stifled the cry, and Mark Broon spoke to the horses to move on, — and Erastus Smiles strolled down towards the pool.

VI.

THE WAR MEETING.

LIFE was gay enough, those early summer days, in the mountains. That is, at the first glance you would have said so. There was much coming and going at all the hotels; the railway trains were never longer, the dusty highways were never more cumbered with conveyances, the light private buggies, the village wagons loaded with city cousins, and the proud Concord stages with bright colors and six-in-hand. Oh, such horses! And such exhilarant rides upon the seats next and back of the driver.

There was no lack of hands of New York acquaintances, idle young fellows in white and blue flannel, and brown faces, who strolled up to Mark with:

"How are you, Broon?"

"Ah, Broon, we've heard about your den up here."

"Den? A castle, a palace, they say in town. Odd chap, that father of yours."

"Mark, old boy, you have n't cut the city forever, and become a farmer, eh?"

"Here, give me a shake, too. I say, that magnificent creature who just went into the ladies' room — Beg pardon." For Broon's face was very grave in spite of himself, and the last young speaker made it graver. "Married, Mark? Excuse me. But I really didn't know it."

All this, while the horses disappeared round the corner, and Mark, awaiting Laura's re-appearance, drifted into the crowd of city men. They represented every section of the country, and all had nothing to do but smoke, and talk, and watch the ever-varying beauties in color and shade upon the solemn, dreamy mountains round. They waited for dinner and the ladies. They scanned every new comer. Many, elderly gentlemen, who were the majority in fact, to the disgust of a hotelful of young ladies, discussed and discussed and hobnobbed with old friends, and lighted a fresh cigar, unheeding the doctor. Not a few were business associates with old Capt. Broon; and the son of the old captain was at once kindly and courteously received.

But this July day had its cloud, to a closer

observer. The newspapers had been at the Crawford these two hours. The newspapers — how the ladies began to fear them, and almost hate them, — they brought a cloud every day. They flew up and down these fair picturesque defiles, and shut out the brilliant, clear sunlight for an hour or two. The coming of the newspaper-train was like the rolling up of a thunder-head, a cloud with sudden rain.

And there was to be a rain, dear girls and matrons, rain of tears all over our happy land; and your gay feathers were to droop, oh, so sadly, and so long. The grass was to be too damp to walk upon, even if your lover was near; and the dews were to be darker than those of these mountains, on moon-lit evenings. The newspaper cloud even now thundered; at a far distance you could hear it every forenoon.

It was the thunder of civil war. Full three months had the storm been murmuring; but these rich and idle, these young and happy, these old and shop-worn, had declined to listen. The early summer of '61 saw Saratoga and Newport, the mountains and the doll's cottages that brocade the Atlantic sands as brilliant as ever. But the farmers' wives and daughters about Franconia knew and wept, and had already

parted with sons and lovers. Not so these wives and daughters dressing for dinner upstairs. The hostler who led Mark's colts to the stable knows the history of every day, from the 16th of April and the shot at Sumter until yesterday; for yesterday he saw his brother enlist, and to-day he has secretly resolved he will do the same.

This was the 17th of July. The papers prophesied it yesterday. To-day they say the great advance is begun. On to Richmond! Soon the telegraph will be burning with the earlier tidings of Bull Run.

In an idle sort of way, busy with his love wounds, Mark Broon is laying off his duster, being whisked by the puffing negro, shaking hands, and thinking of the girl. He is also growing desperate. With no love to live for, then in what heroic way shall he die? He wishes he had lived in the time of the Crusades.

Mark cannot help hearing the stentorian tones of an old merchant who is reading aloud "what the *Tribune* says." Everybody listened. The man who had just finished reading "what the *Herald* says," was listening as eagerly as any. The man who held a *Times* rocked to and fro upon the back legs of his chair and jammed

his heel into the slats of the veranda-railing, impatient to begin in turn. Waiters and cooks, grooms, and farmers who had just driven in with "stuff" to sell, put their ears to the lattice-work; and in vain did Nicholas order them "away from the front of the house." There are sterner orders abroad, sirs. "Classes" are to mingle again in America. Blood is to mix before you are five years older, the blood of that negro waiter and the young millionaire to whom he hands champagne by the filler there; mix in a pool at Petersburg. But then no one dreams of that yet, as the *Tribune* reader finishes his last dispatch.

"May God help us!" cried the old gentleman, "I wish I was a young man!" He sprang to his feet, tossed the crumpled *Tribune* into a score of snatching hands down on the drive and, lifting his spectacles high up in his right hand, began to harangue:

"You young fellows, here, why, I should think it would make your blood boil to read of this glorious opportunity to go fight for your country."

Mark Broon looked straight into the speaker's eyes, and his handsome young face flushed in an instant through all his weather color. In his

heart, for a moment, it was as when the wind suddenly changes after days of sultriness. It was one of those eager instants of time, when you are upon the eve of solving many problems. The young fellow's lips parted, but for breath and not speech. He was alive now; the lethargy of a life-time was gone. He remembers to this day that shock of a sentence from an old man's lips. It was pain, shame, hope, pique of love, patriotism, dreams of heroic deaths, something to say to father, more to say to Laura, a way out, an object in life, a whirl, a way to forget her if he must, and a way to make her weep for him!

It came so suddenly. But then every boy or youth has it sooner or later, a galvanic shock that wakes every sensibility from head to foot. His character is being born then. He cannot tell himself what will survive this throe. Strange that he had not thought of his country before. But then a woman had bewitched him; and he had been a fool in such stern times, chasing after this girl. To get a wife. What are wives? To be happy. What is happiness? A mission? And here was a mission going a-begging. Let her go marry this fortune hunter. Why, there he is now, by his father's side, who is listening to this "war speech" with his usual sneer.

Over the ends of his bended thumbs Dr. Smiles caught the old merchant's eye as the latter paused to take breath. It was strange how the doctor could enforce himself. The white-haired orator swallowed the beginning of his next sentence, and stopped, regarding Smiles. Quick as a flash Smiles got in his word and had the entire audience.

"But there is another side, my friend!"

"Hear him, my countrymen—"

"Yes, hear me," Smiles went on, calm, cold and honey-toned. "What are you going to gain by war? This gigantic North will slay a few thousand of those poor Southern gentlemen and—"

"Who are you? A Southerner?"

With a smerk, "No sir. By five generations a New Yorker. I know the South, however. There is no endurance there; they are passionate gentlemen of culture. We can easily crush them. I say I have as profound a contempt for their army as you have. But what's the use in killing off the people from any state for the mere fiction of keeping the soil in a nominal union?"

"Who are you?" roared the merchant. "My name is Stone, sir. I trust I am well known in

the South. But you? Why, you are neither one thing nor another. I was born in Charleston, S. C., though loyal to my country these five and thirty years. I've lived in New York. I know these misguided Southrons. They will fight like heroes; and before we whip those brave traitors, that son of yours — for I guess he is by the resemblance — will be drafted if he don't volunteer!"

Everybody turned eyes on the son, who grew ashen as he started to spring to his feet. But the doctor's toe touched the son's toe, which signal nobody could see among the thick chairs. Erastus sunk back as his father turned his black eyes affectedly up, and exclaimed:

"God forbid that a child of mine should be a shedder of blood! Mine, sir, is the blessed healing art. As to who I am, I trust there are several of these fair ladies who can speak for me."

The thumbs seemed to roll poor Stone, the patriot and honest man, into fine powder.

At that word, everybody became conscious, for the first time in this hot flash, that the ladies had flocked out of the low parlor windows and hall-ways to make up a brilliant and anxious audience. They stole arms through arms of excited

husbands and fathers. They, silent and affrighted, caught at the hands of brothers and sons. Some whispered dissuasions and pleaded in low, sweet tones with the men they loved "not to talk horrid politics." Some, with impressive palor, and some with pretty blushes of real terror, put faces to male shoulders, having tugged in vain at arms and hands to lead the lords away.

And in that perfume and flutter, that rustle of lawns and silks, that bouquet of fair young forms and matronly dignities; in that crush, not of the ball-room, in that throng where not a laugh was heard, it was quite high time that some restraint should come, for half the men were on their feet with rage beyond control.

A telegram did it. It ran:

"*We are being whipped at Bull Run.*"

It was the brush of Thursday, reader. Sunday, the 21st of July, a day never to be forgotten, was not yet.

"I told you so," sneered Smiles.

"Not so, sir! You prophesied the very contrary!"

It was Mark Broon. Poor boy, he had never faced this man before. He had felt, for some moments, his soul glaring at the pair without

using his eyes, as sometimes the soul can see with the face not turned, ever since Mr. Stone's first rebuff. He knew why the doctor had talked on his chosen tack almost as well as if he had actually overheard the smooth whisper, "There's your rival, Rat; I'll talk to egg him to the enlisting point."

The telegram and the taunt had proved quite too much. Mark instantly broke his resolution and turned to look straight at the two. What his lips said was like what flax says when the flame licks it. Flash!

"Do you call my father a liar?"

Flash second! from Erastus, chair-armed.

"I acknowledge no acquaintance with you nor your father," replied Broon. "But since I have spoken, I am willing to confess openly that I've been an idle fool! I love my country. I respect and hate traitors and will go fight them. And I despise the man who is on neither side!"

"Look at a traitor!"

"And another!"

"And another!"

It was in chorus from a handful of Kentucky gentlemen, who instantly drew together and, without perhaps intending to rally to him, about the doctor still calmly seated, and about Erastus half advancing. Then one said:

"Perhaps you'll fight us now, young fellow!"

Crash! As forty chairs were pushed back and as many men got on feet. Everybody was standing now. One united cry in soprano, discordant and pitiful, as women fluttered, but, for the most part, did not fly. Then "good society" in anarchy as complete, as instant, as in a mining camp. Human nature will always quickly lapse to barbarism at sufficient provocation.

"Papa!" "Charley!" "Tom!" "Oh, my husband!" "My boy!" "My child!"

A vortex of white arms flashing and coiling out of laces and gauzes and about men's necks; lips pouting, paling and pleading. Such as felt that they must faint, swooped into the parlors to convenient sofas. Female gray heads took shelter also, and sat sobbing convulsively behind their handkerchiefs, while others, mothers of young children, clucked them together and out of harm's way, ruffled charmingly.

"Oh, this dreadful war! And I have one son here and another in the South!" The old dame's tears streamed down upon her diamond-loaded hands. She seemed to be fairly washing her hands in the tears, rocking herself to and fro.

"And I have brothers there. Oh, how my husband rails at them of late."

The pretty speaker's cheeks were bloodless as she sat clinging to her children, and pricking ears to hear what next from the veranda.

But who can delineate it, that agony of horror, the war among brethren? And we had grown up a generation to whom wars were only in histories, or in newspaper dispatches from be yond seas, which our women never so much as glanced at. We could not believe it, least of all these women of velvet ease.

When Laura Lane came tripping down the broad stair, beautiful in her own grief, and thinking only of it, this is what she saw from the threshold, where she paused transfixed.

The man she hated, his misshapen features blazing; the man she loved, his fine face kin dled as she had seen it before, but now with an added angry glow. Broon was advanced into the center of the throng. They seemed to make way for him like a leader, and to look towards him for commands. Dr. Smiles was very grave, for a change, and had stepped back, half hid among ladies, who were at once both shielding him and themselves by him. Women will so contradict themselves in danger. They were patients of his.

Laura thought she had never seen Mark Broon

appear so manly. She thought, "Grand!" But in an instant suppressed it with:

"Foolish boy! Oh, shame! A public, vulgar collision about poor me!"

Of course she reasoned so. She supposed the rivals had never met face to face before. As for the war, why, this child had been heart-full of her own civil war, mother against lover. It was so with half the country; we were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.

Her disgrace, the humiliation of old John Lane's family, was now complete. He not dead three years, and yet his wife the willing victim of an adventurer, his fortune squandered, his daughter the bone of contention in a low scrimmage in a fashionable hotel, before some of the best of their old neighbors and the mates of many a happier day; for she caught sight of several school-mates in the throng. It was too much. She would have fled anywhere to escape, but at that moment she heard Mark's clear, calm reply to the challenge of the Kentucky gentleman.

"Sirs, war is a grievous thing at best, and would be doubly grievous in this presence. I suppose none of us are accustomed to street

brawls. But if you are down in Virginia next week we may possibly meet there. For, if God spare me, I'll match bold language with deeds. The loyal North will resort to the means that the South has suggested. If the whole country must be laid waste and made a desert to save this Union, so it shall be."

Cheer on cheer kindled the young fellow. He began to be without pain at the heart. He remembers that he was surprised to notice how almost happy he was. A natural speaker, a splendid voice, the boy-spirit yet in the man's body, he went on:

"I warn Southern gentlemen, that if this war continues, they will see the day when this free nation sets free every slave, — the thing my good old father has been praying for ever since I can remember. And I would like to ask that doctor, back among the ladies, if that isn't worth the struggle?"

Erastus was so excited as to be utterly irrelevant in picking his quarrel.

"You seem to taunt my father with being a member of an abolitionist society. Father is in sympathy with all advanced thinkers, but he would not not fight for a nigger."

"I did not know nor refer to what you appear

to half confess," quickly responded Mark. "But as near as I can learn, your father don't fight for anything when he can win by indirection. Where he can make capital by posturing as an abolitionist, no doubt he has—"

"Scoundrel! Take that back, or—"

But the tiger spring was very foolish. Mark Broon was much the finer man. His gigantic strength was like a vice-clasp on Erastus' fore-arm. His own lifted right arm was ready for a crushing blow; when, like a sunburst, Laura Lane stood between them, and reached up her cold hand to his wrist. That was as far as she could reach, and further than most women, for she was of queenly stature.

She spoke not a word. But the soft hand was so chill, and the fingers seemed to caress as they entwined. Her front was commanding. She regarded him only, and deigned not a glance on the other man. She was so majestic, so noble, and yet the sweet face so full of trouble, that the throng, viewing her, breathed and breathed again. The interval of two breaths without a word seemed like an hour just then. The outskirts craned their necks. The next breath would have roared a cheer for this peerless peace-maker. It was in every heart already

But just then Mark Broon dropped his arm and bent and kissed her! He would have been more than human had he not. He had this in his thought: "The first shall be the last!" and this in his voice:

"Forgive me this, good angel. I sincerely thank you. You have saved me from the memory of doing him harm. Let him go!"

And with that he whirled young Smiles from the grip of his left hand like a log, back into the spasmodic clutches of his supporters.

"You shall pay for this!" shrieked the strug gling Erastus, over the shoulders of half a dozen gentlemen, who mingled laughter with indignation as they restrained him.

Mark looked at him with contempt, cooling rapidly now, and answered the multitude instead of young Smiles.

"I beg humble pardon of this company. I have no feud to pursue with this fellow. God forbid that I ever meet him again."

Then, with well-bred self-control, though she could feel him yet shaking with the subsidence of his fervor, he drew Laura's arm through his, with the remark:

"If we can do it, shall we not make our way to the dining-room?"

To dine? No one seemed to have thought of that. But the word began to spread among the men, who can generally manage to eat, come what will. The mention of dining began to act like oil on the ugly sea. In a moment more the ladies would have been grouped into threes and fours of burning faces and chattering tongues, and the men would have been laying their hats in the rack by the dear good dining-room doors.

But the telegraph again began to burn. Some one came from the office with tidings. At once a young fellow was reading it, standing on a chair. It was the miserable news of the early ill success about Manassas. It was "a mere skirmish." The next tick, "It was a battle." It was, — no one seemed to know just what. The most contradictory dispatches were received and read in the space of the next five minutes. In what seemed a moment, hall, veranda, steps were packed again and more densely than ever. A hostler stood close against Laura on the left. The kitchen emptied itself into the parlors adjacent. There was no outcry now. The reader on the chair went over and over every yellow sheet he had. It was necessary, for the telegraph had suddenly ceased to burn. That was

well, for hearts were burning hot enough now. Do you not remember it, reader? Then pity me, trying to tell how women wept and fainted; how knees trembled under age, and young blood boiled.

There was no one to wait on him, but good Dr. Smiles passed through and into the dining-room. He had persuaded two rich old lady patients to hang on his arms, poor shaky things. Erastus, feather-smoothed somewhat, now followed, or was trying to follow, through a window, with one of his sisters.

"Come, gentlemen, dine first and enlist afterwards," laughed the doctor, as he wedged his way along.

The throng turned its eye on the bold cynic in amazement. Did you ever feel the eye of Humanity turned full on you? You, heretofore insignificant, private, suddenly become the observed, the public, the solitary among thousands, who drew apart and had nothing to do with you but to look at you? Not a human being will approach you except with the eyes? It is terrible to feel that the whole of your little world has suddenly turned into an eye, and that staring on you. It is fame or infamy, both unendurable alike, doubtless, in their stare. But

Smiles was equal to it. He was conscious of power. He had had no sensibilities these several years. He returned the gaze with even a satisfied look, and repeated:

"Dine first and enlist afterwards, good friends."

The word was electric. Enlist!

With a bound Mark Broon mounted the stair, and shouted:

"I propose that we enlist first and dine afterwards. Come, boys, let us raise a company right here! Clear us that table by the parlor door. Tom Stone, I believe you are your father's son. You have heard the old gentleman's war speech. Sit down at that table and take our names. Put me down first, if I may venture to claim so much honor."

"Hold, gentlemen," spoke a quiet voice, and a matter-of-fact man pushed his way into the crowd. "I happen to be a recruiting officer, regularly commissioned by the governor of this state. Have been working all the forenoon among the farmers and such, round the hotel; didn't expect so high game. Here are regular papers. But this means business, boys. Now then!"

And he threw the sheets — Who can forget

those scrolls that "meant business?"—down on the marble-top. He was seated and his portable ink-bottle was slipped out of pocket in a moment. He held up the pen for "Whose hand first?"

Ah, poor Laura! Has it come to this? You were standing just below Mark, your breast heaving, your matchless face, your glorious eyes upturned in a sort of wondering worship, when Mark spoke again:

"All right, sir. Put me down."

You did not sob, Laura Lane, as many of the women about you began to do. You seemed to turn to stone. But oh, such shape of stone!

"That I cannot do, young man," said the officer to Mark. "You must come and take the pen. Every man above one and twenty can sign. Here!"

The outstretched pen was like a magician's wand. The throng parted under it. Mark advanced soberly through the opened way, and took the pen and signed.

Yet Vanity Fair did not cheer. It was in stupor. This "meaning business" had benumbed it. The tension, however, was awful. This silence could not last. My God, what war of

thoughts, invasions, pillage and burning of youthful hopes and charges of desperate resolves, in those silent moments! And as yet there was not another hand to take the pen which Mark held out.

"Just ask the musicians," proposed the homespun recruiting officer, "to give us 'Hail Columbia' or 'America.'"

The foreign fellows shook themselves, and began the latter dear old melody with horn and fiddle. There were not many pieces, but at the beginning of the second line you would not have known that there were any. A hundred voices, two hundred, three hundred, within doors, without upon the lawns and gravel, voices of men, women, children sung. They roared it; they piped it. Look at that old farmer in his blue frock, he with the hay-fork over his shoulder, who would have thought he could sing? They sung it with a strange solemnity. Not a face smiled. They sung it as if the words were weapons. The men marked time with their feet; it answered for the drum-beat. But oh, how it struck the women's hearts! The building seemed a living, throbbing thing. The very flag, that lazily twined about the staff up in the July heat seemed to catch its meaning, and shook itself

out on the sky. Some one from without caught sight of the flag. Of course, everybody was thinking of it and wanting to see it.

"See! She streams to the North, as if going South!"

Then cheer on cheer went up. Yet the music rolled on. Words, or no words, men sung. The women grew out of their tearfulness and fluttered little handkerchiefs in air. Yet not a few of these women were like the dead; struck down, you would have said, by a breath, when some one shouted the name of their sons or husbands or brothers who had grasped the pen.

For all this while now the pen was busy. The line was like the voters' line at the ballot box. That was right. The younger people who read this narrative cannot realize it. This description seems to you extravagant. In fact, it is written in pale colors. There were hours in '61 when men crowded, pushed, contended for the enlisting pen. It was a sublime frenzy, but God save us from the need of ever seeing it again.

Now dine, ladies and gentlemen. But your cook is a soldier with your son. The house is unmanned. Well, well, that will not matter, for to-morrow many of the guests will be gone into

camp, up here in the country village of Bethlehem, and Mark Broon will be captain of the new company, "meaning business." Dine, now; you had better; for it will be the last time to some of you that the whole family sit at the same table. What? You will not dine? You have no stomach for green things? You should have gone in with the dear doctor and his son, who have already finished a hearty dinner so good-naturedly. Indeed, the noble man is in the best of humor; even half proposes congratulating "Captain Broon," but upon reflection thinks better of it, and turns rather to congratulate his own son.

The doctor finds no especial comfort in the benignant smiles he turns on his own family, whose faces are pale with the consciousness of that coldest of all kinds of cold social ostracism; nor in the faces of such Southerners as frown while the stiff lips nibble. It was a dinner with snatches of patriotic song whistled and caroled amid hurrahs and laughter, sobs and angry cries. Yet the doctor wiped his lips complacently the while, and kept Erastus at his side. Finally he remarked:

"We have been sitting here two hours, children," consulting his watch. "I think the storm

has swept by, and our house is standing yet, my boy."

"Curses! But just look at that pair," growled Erastus, with a stare towards the wide front hall.

"Oh, fie," was the doctor's response. "You do not seem to take into the account my patient, her mother."

There they were. Mark was helping Laura into his buggy at the door. In a sort of dream the young hero of much congratulation and frequent applause had managed to get through the lionizing of the last hour. He was sure of nothing but that Laura Lane had been clinging to his arm now for some time, and pleading to be taken up to Eaglecroft. He had an idea that forty different men had offered to telegraph to his father; that thirty or forty men had gone to order his colts, and brought them round, and now were all trying to help him and Laura into the vehicle; and that he had explained that he must drive up for the night, but would surely be on hand when the company was organized in the morning. He was certain that for a long time he protested that he would not be captain, and finally gave over protests helplessly.

He was glad when the parting cheers grew

fainter; when the clouds of red dust shut them, departing, out of view; and he could turn and look on this girl at his side.

VII.

THE SOLDIER'S WEDDING.

"YOU have eaten nothing since morning, Laura," Mark began. "I know of a farm-house, if these horses"—feathering the whip over their swelling flanks—"will ever climb this hill and bring us there, where we can stop for a glass of fresh milk."

But Laura only clung to him.

"Look, there it is, with its red gable!"

But Laura made no reply.

"And the cows are just coming home," he resumed. "I'll call for a glass. Meanwhile I'll make a soldier of the cow-boy for my company."

"But I am not hungry, Mark."

Red and white flesh and blood, with downcast eyes, toying with the fringe of the robe.

"It is strange," with a bright look up and full at him, "how different you men are from us women. You are hungry! And yet your very soul must be full of your great errand."

Then after a shy pause:

"And still you seem to have been giving thought to poor me."

"Because I thought you ought to eat enough to live? Say rather a thousand higher thoughts of you than that, Laura Lane," he exclaimed, with a laugh almost cheery, and catching at the overture.

In the enthusiasm that now swayed him all conventionalities seemed of small account. Yet it is not probable that he would have ventured to resume the serious subject of their morning ride had she not thus frankly encouraged him; for it was not six hours since, along this very road, he had pledged her his honor never to return to the tender theme again, to trouble her.

Pages of attempted description, however, could not present so graphic a picture of those exacting times as appears in the simple fact that, in the next moment, Mark Broon seized Laura Lane's hand, and exclaimed:

"After what has transpired to-day, Laura, and here, on the eve of what is to transpire, it may be almost to-morrow, what is there left to you and me but be wed?"

She started; but she did not offer to release

her hand. The sublime crisis in the life of a great nation had wrought its ripening effect upon her girlish mind as upon his. The spoiled child of the morning was a woman at evening. How startling it often was in those awful days to mark the sudden maturing of youth; the lad of fifteen years took up the weapons of a man, and with difficulty could he be dissuaded; the mere child wore the countenance of maturity, fearing and hoping, weeping and praying at her mother's side, as her sire or brothers spoke of "the duty of the hour." As a sunny week in January has been known to swell the buds almost like June, so did youth ripen before its time; so were courtships shortened, and decisions of the heart, which usually need years, were taken in a day. And yet I, who have lived to see the generation born of such marriages, have failed to note any less happiness in them, or in the homes they have blessed.

"To be married, I say, Laura."

She did not yet reply. Scratch of hoofs climbing the pebbly hill; song of birds in the cool of evening all about them, and caw of winding flocks of crows, high up against the tender-tinted sky; the light of that great burning sun, low down and red as blood, cast over them and all things.

"You do not answer me," he said, reverently raising her hand to his lips.

"At once, Mark?"

This she said, with a demure glance aside, towards him, but hardly up into his impassioned face.

"Yes, at once. That is, within the week, Laura."

"It is so short a time," she resumed, yet unmistakably yielding, moment by moment, but with little motions of alarm as if shrinking back from her own new-found peace and happiness.

"It — it is so very short a time," repeating it.

"It is so grand a time; a time of war."

"What will the world say?"

"Who dare wish ill to the soldier's wife? Besides, Laura, I cannot tell how noble, how grand, how lovely you have come to be in my eyes from this day's revelation of you. I cannot live without you. I can live through everything for you. I will not leave you undefended amid such toils as I see laid for you."

"But mother?"

"You can defend her better as my wife."

"But we can have no wedding," and she laughed and looked down charmingly, apologizing for this, a woman's reason.

"Which shows, my dear girl, that you yield to me. Thank God! It shall be a soldier's wedding at least; and that's going to be the fashionable kind, this season, Laura Lane. Depend on that!"

Then that celestial rapture was sent to them which is meant by Heaven for most of us, if we will receive it. They were for the time the two only earthly beings. They demanded of the universe, "Who objects?" And the universe held its peace. It was well for the universe; for the man never before felt so strong. He could defy the world. He could defy death. And then, after a little, the woman looked pleadingly into his face and said:

"But you surely will live to come back again, dear Mark?"

"I will!" he answered.

As if the power of life and death was all his own. Indeed, he felt a religious solemnity in the reply. God would speed the right; and Mark Broon had never felt himself so near right in his life as in the two great steps he had taken this day. He was a new man, with new aims, wife and country.

When had he ever lived such a day? It seemed years since the morning. In the silence

that is more vocal than speech he found himself studying her glove which lay in her lap since she had removed it to put on the ring. But who can analyze the nameless charm that emanates from these small tokens? Who can write how nature grows sentient and sympathizing; that song of evening bird, the evening clouds that begin to wear faces of benediction, the highway maples that whisper, "It is well;" and the wild flowers that encourage them, "It will all come out right;" or who can interpret what the mountain stream is saying to her, as it murmurs at the roadside?

Then there came over him a feeling of his unworth; that possibly he was very selfish, after all, in thus making sure of her. He could hardly feel his right to her. As much right had he to the sunset splendors! After a while, amid all the nameless small chat, which everybody knows and nobody could write down, he must say this serious thing to her; confess that he had no right to claim her; she was far too good and noble for him, etc. To all of which he got the usual reply of good women, reassuring him once for all. At any rate to most men that courtship reassurance is once for all; they never harbor such doubts of their rights and worth again.

An indescribable journey that, the remnant of that summer evening's winding, loitering climb, high up among the clouds of leaves, and clouds of moon-silvered mists to distant Eaglecroft. And the fires of this day's kindling are still burning brightly all the way; fires of heroism, fires of love. With the man at least there are no signs of reaction; he talks incessantly of war and country, of his embryo company, of whom he will make lieutenants, of the men and utterances he had heard and encountered that day, of all the great patriotic speeches he had declaimed from his school-days; and generally aired his heroism, which, we confess, he had proved this day was ready for deeds, all in her admiring eyes and raptured ears.

This display of himself was the highest possible compliment to her whom he loved and trusted, whose admiration was the sweetest reward on earth to him. He turned his heart inside out for her to look upon, and his dreams, his hopes, his plans.

I hope she appreciated it, had the fine discernment to detect its delicate devotion to herself, as I believe she had, and I trust the reader has.

For herself Laura Lane would not, could not

take much account of obstacles that surely were before her; as mountains in the distance but add the picturesque to the road you are traveling. Her spirits kept pace with his, for the present. At length, as they drew near the journey's end, that other problem, of their religious difference, began to reassert itself and demand her attention. She ventured to speak, after a while, her thoughts, saying:

"Mark, there is never a sky so bright that no clouds obtrude."

"What clouds obtrude?" he asked stoutly.

"Well, Mark, perhaps there are only small flecks of cloud left. I am sure that you know — that you are are able to approach the unseen God more intimately than I. Yet it is strange how near that Great Protecting Power has become, in very thought, because we — since we need Him so much now."

He suffered her to stammer through her new confession of faith without assistance to the end, delighted beyond words himself that she had been driven into faith as a refuge.

"It is not the first time, Laura, that a doubting, or, at least, a mislead and blinded human soul has fled to God in a storm. I foretold you it would be so."

"These dreadful days at least drive human hearts together."

"Yes; and they will drive many hearts to the protecting God. Now, here we are at home. I am sure your religious atmosphere will clear, my dear. Indeed, I think it has already. Come now, daughter of Yankee land, you are no disbeliever. You are a child of the Puritans. Blood will tell. You are a daughter of the old heroes, and I am going to prove a true son. Eh?"

There was so much of almost unnatural excitement in the young fellow's mind that Laura found herself borne along with it. It was an enthusiasm. It was irresistible.

"I — I think I ought to tell you about our family affairs," she managed to get in.

But they were at the horse-block; they were alighting. His arm was about her as he conducted her along the veranda. The truth of her affection for him insisted on being allowed its perfect repose, for the present at least.

"Leave all such affairs to my shrewd, my honest and strong old father," he said, as they slipped through the open low window into the dining-room.

It was a late supper that these two took in the new dining-room of Eaglecroft; and there

were only those two and the servants. As they finished, Mark's eyes wandered about the handsome apartment for a moment, when he said:

"And you shall be mistress here till the master returns. By morning, Laura, the captain, my father, will be here; and before you wake out of the good sleep I pray for you, I'll have the news all broken, and he'll kiss you as his daughter when you come down."

Poor girl! it was well on into night now; and besides he would not have suffered her had she begun to tell the mixed tale of her entanglement with the Smiles family. Indeed, it came to her like a shock that she had forgotten all about it; that she was almost engaged, or how was it? — with Erastus. The last mention of the honest old sea captain's name brought everything to mind.

Yet youth must have its sleep. Thank God, youth can procrastinate. Dear, kind Procrastination, though called the thief of time by envious Age, whose time is short, thou art the friend of youth. Thou layest on to-morrow the heavy load that is killing to-night, thou takest from young hearts the present grief and fretfulness, giving sleep, yes, giving present sweets. Art slow and dull? It is false; thou, Procrastination, art quick

to snatch, to pounce upon and carry off a present joy from the very clutch of a stolid sorrow.

And so Laura Lane slept, and dreamed bright dreams, on the very eve of many battles.

At the foot of the stairs, the next morning, there stood the old captain, with his strong face all smiles, one hand pulling his watch from his fob, and the other extended towards her. She could not disturb his look of honest confidence by saying, as she had resolved on while dressing:

"Come, you two gentleman, and hear the confession of a poor fatherless girl, before we go further."

Not she, for the old man's great hand got hers, and his deep tones began:

"Well, daughter, it's hardly ladies' watch on deck yet, but I thought you might be early. We've much to do the next few hours. With true love I greet ye, my daughter. I'll use that word now. God grant to bless the boy and you. Yes, bless the boy and you!"

The dear old heart, so genuine, so strong, and so fatherly! All tears in an instant, she went close up and kissed him and clung to him, even as he handed her along to Mark, who now drew near.

"You will go to meet mamma with me, Mark?" she asked timidly, as he was about to lead her out to view the morning from the veranda.

"No, dearest; I have relegated both the mothers to my father. Who can resist him?"

An hour's walking and wooing, in the glory of the sunrise, in the breath and perfume of leaves shining wet in dew, with glimpses through tree-tops of the far-stretching lowlands, from which the mists were lifting with portents to this enraptured pair.

When at length they came in-doors, the old captain was waiting for them by the library, with the two mothers on either arm, "like a tug between two ships." His hearty voice cried out:

"It's all right, children. Yes, yes. I brought 'em round easily enough," and he laughed between every word. Then more gravely:

"All right, except this going off to the wars. Hem!" An instant's recurrence to that thought was enough to choke his utterance. "God bless ye." And he was silent.

The women made their dash at the young people. There were tears and little outcries. There was a sweep of white down the broad

stair, and Miss Hardy on the scene, astonished, informed, then set in the bouquet of emotion somewhere, like one passion flower more.

Then there was the breakfast, which the two men ate; but the women? The idea!

After that the wedding fixings for the women's heads and hands, and the war fixings for the men's.

Mark was to be gone all the following day, agreeable to his promise made to the men who had informally elected him captain. When he left, to drive down the mountain, it was understood that he should engage the clergyman for that day week; but by afternoon he had telegraphed back to Eaglecroft, and got assent to put it "*three days away; for his men were to be forwarded like a mob to help save the capital.*"

You can hardly credit me, reader, you stickler for proprieties! No; but it was a time of war. It is difficult for the swift pen to put to paper the domestic events that trod upon each other's heels, those days, in many a New England home, usually most sedate and orderly; swiftly, yet not with confusion, and not without reason, events that ordinarily consume months or even years, were transpiring in hours.

In a whirl of war times at Eaglecroft everything went on. Unfortunate Mrs. Lane was prostrated one hour and recovered the next; on the whole the shock was good for her, being stimulating to self-forgetfulness. Her heart-of-oak brother came hurrying up from the city the next morning and promptly ranged himself, fully assenting, on Laura's side.

"We will fix the farm business somehow, and take care of her," meaning the widow, "between us," with a roguish glance at Mark's father.

The new uniform came, and they must all handle the shining sword, for in those days real swords were strange toys in all hands; the shoulder straps with two little bars were mysteries, and impossible to have been got with such dispatch except for that man of resources, the sharp recruiting agent, whom we saw at the hotel.

Somehow, the prettiest wedding dress in the world was fashioned; and as for the other ladies, why, it was to be simply a family affair. The day came, and the old clergyman from the village came. The hour came and passed. They were wed. It was, I remember, Monday morning, at eleven o'clock, and as fair a day as ever was spread on the brilliant July earth.

There was an honest attempt made, usually, at those strange weddings of '61, to be merry, as all should be upon a wedding day. And there was, indeed, no lack of high excitement, at least, to kindle laughter and speed the happy hours; but it was quite too plain that it was excitement, and not the flow of joyous spirits, after all. The cloud was at hand; in an hour more it would shut out the sun, do your best with your obliging cheer, kind neighbors.

"I have locked the door to the library, Mark," cried Mr. Hardy, shaking the key in the young man's face.

The telegraph instrument was in the library. Yet, the sly fellow, this same patriotic mayor used that key every fifteen minutes to enter and read the tape that had begun to print off nightly tidings. For a time, however, he kept those tidings to himself.

"I have told those musical fellers to skip all national airs," said the old captain. "I thought we would keep well off shore of all these war troubles for one day, at least."

And the old sailor took his place in the family glee with a zest that provoked you to broad laughter during the short time that he "commanded" it.

The air was full of sweet sounds. The lawns were crowded with servants, looking on through the windows; even the wood-choppers and the road-menders were there, wishing this happy couple well. And so ran on the time till noon. One short hour. It must have been just about an hour after the clergyman's last words that Mr. Hardy, who had been showing evident signs of uneasiness as Mark watched him, came from the furtive library visit with a face so grave that it could not but provoke question.

"Look here, old comrade, what's in the wind?" This from the old captain, as he seized his arm.

"I must know, too," said Mark, quickly approaching.

"Come aside, then," was Mr. Hardy's whispered reply.

By noon of that day came the tidings of the saddest sorrow this republic had ever known. That terrible Sunday at Manassas, and the utter defeat of the Union arms! The capital itself probably now burning! Every available man to the front without an hour's delay!

Mark sought out his wife and led her apart. The dread news was given by Mr. Hardy to everybody, and dispersed them into groups of

twos and threes. Mark held his wife's face between his hands, and, kissing it over and over, began to say:

"It would have been only a week or two more at best, darling. You will show all these people what a heroine you are. You know the war gave you to me."

Laura answered not a word, but clung about him helplessly for a little. Indeed, they conversed without words. She felt his thoughts; he felt her thoughts. Who but knows how it is! Who but knows what it is! It is in the touch of hands, in the pressure of the person, in the silent spurn of speech. It is the heart's interview, and not the heart's audience; for it is seeing, and not hearing. They gazed upon each other's souls in rapture and in agony!

They knew this was to be the parting, for before sunset Mark's company was to march out from the village green to join the regiment. Whatever the wife would say in secret must be said now. Yet she made no explanations. Why should she, being at last this one's wife? That fact overwhelmed the past. All entanglements, all inconsistencies in action, all fears were overlaid by this supreme present. If Mark ever should care to inquire, one word would satisfy

him: "I am your wife. Whatever was between me and that man matters not, since I became your wife."

And he saw this by interview. He disdained to recall such trifles as lovers' quarrels and girlish freakishness. He, the husband and the hero! Somehow he could only think and feel in the immense and the heroic. His great errand had made him great. In rare moments, once or twice in a lifetime, it is given to nearly all men to be great men. In those early days of patriotic vehemence, debts, sorrows, looms, anvils, cases at court, aged quarrels, plans of wealth, the children's schooling, — everything else shrunk to the size of trifles beside the vast purpose: To WAR FOR THE UNION."

What wonder, then, if, from his high summit, the husband-hero looked with contempt upon the trash of jealousies and heart-burnings with which he had distracted himself on the Smiles' account? All that was "before the war," — a phrase to be long used in this land. All that was before he became a man or she a woman; before he became a husband or she a wife; before he became a hero or she a heroine. Heaven bless her! How he trusted her, and trusted Heaven with her safe-keeping.

And then, too, they both believed the world had changed. This is always the outlook from the wedding-day windows, but especially wedding days of '61.

Laura spoke of it, remarking:

"Do you really believe, Mark, that this great war is going to change the hearts of all the people about us, and make them as kind as — as charitable, if you please — as they all seem to us now?"

"Or, is this the out-look from wedding-day windows always?" he replied, smilingly supplying her suppressed alternative.

"Yes, especially wedding-days in times of war. Can the selfish world be trusted to keep its fair promises to you soldiers? Will the present admiration of the hero guard all the hero's possessions?"

"What harm can the world do us?"

"I wonder how your social world will look on me, when I go down to the city with you?"

"Why, with royal welcome, of course. Indeed, they had better!" his worshipful gaze changing into a defiant one.

"All your church people, for instance," feeling her way back to the miserable theme of

her supposed, her acknowledged, religious incompatibility.

"My dear girl," with affectionate decision, "I will hear no more of that. You are a believer! And somehow, you trembling thing, I am confident that creatures of the Smiles genus will never cross our path nor crawl into our sight again."

"At any rate," she resumed, after a brooding silence, "we two have but one sorrow for this hour, the sorrow of parting."

"And even that is thrilling. We have a great double joy; that we have been wed these three hours, and are of high rank among God's earthly servants because we suffer so keenly for the sake of serving."

They sat, trembling with rapture and with grief, upon the broad veranda, whence the white tents of the camp far down in the valley could be seen; sat, left to themselves, till the carriage should make haste for the drive down the mountain.

They sat in prayer, withal, towards the last, and she suggested it; or rather she, observing his closed eyes, through which a tear was at length struggling, softly whispered:

"Let me hear you, dearest. It will teach me how."

If a pang struck through him at the thought that it might more properly have been the other way, that a man's wife should have been his teacher in approach to the throne of infinite mercy, he hid the pain and tightened his large hand upon her small one, and spoke his petition to the Universal Father. The low murmur of the manly voice, trembling with the tenderness of youth's opulent emotion, lifting the two lives into the protection of the Great Wing, made at least the union of the two souls complete, for this world.

Then the craunching of the carriage wheels over the fresh gravel, drawing nigh.

VIII.

OFF TO THE FRONT.

THE bells! The bells! The bells of Bethlehem!

As the colts which Mark drove flew along the country road, which ended in the main street of the village, they pricked ears to the strange ringing of the bells. The driver and his bride remarked upon the bells, and their hearts beat quicker for their melody. Old Captain Broon, with the other ladies of the family, following close behind, hushed his cheery conversation — the invariable sign of excitement with him being a solemn speechlessness, — and ordered the coachman:

"Crowd on more sail, Tom! Keep close to Mark!"

Through the fine dust that swirled upward in the evening red of a sundown deeply tinted; through the "Indian file" of pedestrians that from a hundred farms lined the roadway, and skurried out to let them pass; through vehicles

of every kind that, loaded with old men and women and children, filled the winding path between the stone walls, green with wild vines; on they bowled, and to the music of the bells.

The bells that called to worship yesterday, and every Sunday since they were first hung in those New England steeples, this day, for the first time, called to war. In New England villages all the church bells do make this exception: they ring in case of fire. But this was not the fire-bell note. The same bells also toll at every villager's death, and tell his age. But this was not the death bell. They ring, indeed, on the morning of the Fourth of July. But this was not the note of Independence Day. They ring for the worship of God in Sabbath's holy calm; and there is, to the Yankee born, no sweeter melody than the tranquil ringing of the old "first bells, at nine o'clock;" a music, wind-borne over meadow and glassy stream, over hill farms, upland pastures, mingled with the diapason of forest trees, echoed from the blue mountains. But the bells of this July evening were not calling to the house of prayer. Their note and clamor were indescribable. They mingled all their former tidings in tidings new. Not a ringer knew that he pulled a tocsin.

But what else could he pull, his heart beating tocsin as he sweated by the great doors of the church this summer night? Fire, Death, the Fourth, Worship! Ah, who can forget how the bells used to ring when "our company" marched away!

The village in holiday attire for that which was not a holiday. Not many flags. Haste, ye shuttles! Weave flags enough for us and the generation before us, for we have no flags. Meanwhile hang we red and white and blue in shapes so vulgar that we laugh as we cheer them, passing the window. Then we grow hushed because of the aged face all tears at the window; the face gazing down the street whither the decrepit feet could not follow the young feet that have just passed out at the gate.

Reader, you and Mark Broon and his bride of these four hours, and all that hied along, and I, saw frequent sights to damp our cheeks.

On thresholds of the villagers' peaceful homes, the man and his sire, the man and his babe, for crutch and cradle could not go to the Green.

The lovers, man and maid, beneath the old trysting maple, secreted, yet seen.

The invalid wife, with marble cheek, against her good man's cheek of bronze; the pet hound that leaped after his young master, and made mournful notes as he lay down to his chain.

The boy-soldier himself, knowing and yet not knowing what all this meant, as he, so smartly dressed in regimentals, paused and turned with one last look at the tree and trellis, at the gable with his chamber dormer, at the hoe, the plow, the harvest-cart, and then at the musket in his white-gloved clutch, which reminded him to march away.

"Three cheers for Captain Broon!"

If it was three, it was three hundred that Mark and Laura had heard since they turned the corner and began to slowly cross the open space that formed the Green. The horses trod softly, for the people were many. It was here that the tents had stood these last few days; tents that are packed in yonder cars this hour now, and the engine pants impatiently for the living remnant of its load.

Here is high confusion waiting for the order which this young officer has come to ordain. Just now he sits and looks at this running to and fro; this bundling of treasures in small compass and hiding them in knapsacks; this

darting about of messengers, who are children and boys and women, with the last little dispatches and freights from home and to home; this clasping of hands and clinging upon necks; this vowing and laughing, vowing and weeping. The young commander sits yet in his vehicle—his groom by the colts,—and leans forward, not in West Point form, on the hilt of his new sword, while his wife toys with the belt and sash; sits very thoughtfully, not only seeing, but hearing all these patriotic sounds, and over all the wild, glad ringing of the bells.

At the head of the Green stands the church. Its old white front is topped by a steeple, which bears a clock. The tongue in its throat is to keep up this unclocklike clangor till the finger on its face marks the hour. Capt. Broon compares his watch with the clock, and turns to say:

"It is time, Laura."

He put out his hand for the trappings which she held, and in doing so caught her two hands for a moment. Their eyes met. She attempted to speak, but the trembling lips curled helplessly and in silence her lashes fell. O Heaven, the women! the women! How calm they often were outwardly, the day "the boys marched

away!" But, Heaven, on what tempests of unrest didst Thou look when these women were alone!

With a spring Mark Broon was standing on the ground and buckling on his accoutrements.

"No, no, papa," eagerly cried Laura, as Mark's father came quickly to cheer her. "Help me to get down, please. I am all courage now. I want to tie his sash."

And she and a thousand other wives, in prosaic '61, did literally belt their knights for holy war, as in the days of chivalry. She was passing lovely as she did it, too, bending in grace, touching with tasteful fingers this gear of parade, and all red and white by turns, regarding bow and tassel with arched movements of her neck. Lovely, so that the neighboring women forgot for the nonce their sorrows to gaze upon her, and to whisper:

"The captain's wife."

"Yes, and a bride."

"The bride of to-day!"

"How can he leave her?"

"How?" And the speaker, a matron of forty, with a babe at her breast, flashed fire in her dark eyes. "How? How, think you, my Enoch goes and leaves us six? My Enoch for twenty years!"

And now Laura had rest from her heartache in her pride. She stood insensible of her mother's caresses, the kisses and tears of sweet Maud Hardy, and the other Mrs. Broon's tender words; all of whom, with the old captain, clustered about her. But gazing only on her husband, now advancing towards his men, she was comforted in a most restful and pure admiration of him. She gloried in him! She delighted in every line of his martial figure as he stood alone some paces before the men, as yet unformed. She foresaw him colonel of a regiment, a general, a great general, and the country's idol! It was a thrilling dream. There were many such poetesses those days. She started at the silence as the bells now ceased to ring, and waited, with a curious trembling, for him to speak the sharp word of command.

"Attention, company!"

The hundred militiamen heard it. The ten hundred spectators heard it, clear, startling, and stilling every chattering tongue. How absolute the order seemed! It was consummation. It was reality at last. Thus and so sharply ended this picnic, this play-day at soldiering on the greensward of the village. There were many who had said it "would never come to this;" but

it had. As for Mark, he felt that with that opening of his lips he began the war; and for this valley he did.

"Fall in!"

The bustling sergeant dressed his men in line.

Strangely serious, as it had never seemed before on any "June training," or other day of mimic parade, sound now the crisp orders of the manual of arms; for this was sober reality. There was conscience in every movement. And when did Aldershot or *Champs de Mars* ever furnish such conscience in the spectator faces round about review?

The people drew the circle of their presence in; they were near enough almost to touch the officers. But they needed no police to keep the decorous peace. The very children, perched on shoulders of the wife and grandsire, held their tongues. No cheers resounded. The border maples ceased to whisper, for the breeze died with the sun. Under the leaves, aslant, the red ray shot its parting glory, and flashed on the bayonets of the soldiers and brass of the musicians, while making the men's shadows into a giant troop upon the distant turf.

The aged pastor, the old Emeritus, bared his

head and took his place at Mark's side. The prayer was not loud; but who failed to hear its every throbbing syllable? It was not long; but what did it leave unsaid? For hearts were so one that the slightest word meant volumes of the great thoughts with which each breast was filled. Once the old man paused, as deep emotion choked his utterance. It was not when he invoked God's blessing on the men, nor when he spoke of loved ones left at home; nor when he asked for a shield from bullets and fevers, from fears and temptations; nor yet when he tenderly petitioned that these returning safe should find no death-emptied chair nor cradle at the fireside,—for we never dreamed that the child would outgrow the cradle ere this sad business was done. No; the white-haired pastor stumbled in his prayer and paused, with great tears coursing down his jocund cheeks, when he told Heaven of the father-land, and attempted to speak of the "dear old flag." Strange that it was so; yet it was.

In those days men used to kiss the flag; used to stop and look up at it, laid out against the New England hills and sky, and find their hot eyes cooled with sudden dews, they could not tell just why. The flag was

everywhere in sight before long, we so hungered for it. It seemed to spring up like the green sprouts upon corn-hills, as if it were a growth of nature, that summer. You remember it, brother, as you looked out from some high foreland over a wide landscape, "the flag" everywhere, everywhere, peeping and flashing near and far through the foliage and against the purple hills.

As the preacher sought to give this sentiment tongue, he could no more than name it. There was a universal sob! It was the heart-throe of these hundreds. It was sublime. It was terrible. It was new. God helped us to a certain habitude as months passed, or we should have died of this awful emotion too oft repeated ere the five long years passed away.

"Amen!"

That was the way he left it. Abruptly: "Amen!" In an instant Capt. Broon's command rescued us.

"Attention, company! Shoulder arms!"

Laura wondered how he could get voice for it, and she could scarce restrain herself from flying at him with one more eager embrace.

"Not so, daughter," said the old sea captain, putting his arms about her and kissing her, his

ruddy face damp with weeping. "Not so. No doubt you have had your good-bye, child. I gave you my hour with him, up on the veranda. Now he goes. See! Isn't he a splendid boy?"

The band struck up the music of a march. Was ever such a band? Mark's pocket had provided for the throwing together of pieces for "the band" for just this emergency. The throng parted for their advance. The order rang, and they began the long campaign amid cheers that drowned all sobs. It was the revulsion of feeling, the sight of rhythmic movement, and the martial strains that inspired and made possible such hurrahs. There was such a lusty uproar from these rural throats, and given with breath after breath in this invigorating air, as would make the cheer of city crowds seem piping treble. It was a good round cheer on cheer, and not a yell. This afterwards became a historic difference upon the battlefield. The North roared their hurrahs; the South yelled theirs.

Laura sat in her husband's vehicle, with the groom doing his best to keep the colts in order, driven as they now were as close in upon the train as was possible. Old Capt. Broon, in the dray with the other ladies, was also permitted to urge his team into the dense throng that filled the depot yard.

The last of the line had filed into the cars. The instrumental music had ceased, and "the boys" were singing, in a sort of desperate, wild way, what might or might not have been "Hail Columbia." Young Capt. Broon stood alone upon the platform, with the point of his new sword pecked into the planking under his feet, like a walking stick, no doubt awkwardly, looking the while at that bright lady, his wife these five hours He saw no one else; she saw no one else. He forgot, for the moment, that he was a soldier; but she did not; she would have died if she had forgotten that. Her only refuge was in remembering that patriotic fact.

"How grand he is! How heroic he is! He goes to save the Union. He is a soldier, and I am a soldier's wife. I will smile. I will be all good cheer. He shall remember me so."

And from the tips of her white fingers she gave him fond love with brave adieu.

But he mounted the car steps as the train moved away, as if, of a sudden, his feet weighed each a ton.

There is this difference between man and woman: his heart fell then, but beat high again an hour after; her heart beat high then, but fell for many, many hours after.

IX.

HERO OR POLTROON.

THE throng was dispersing, and young Mrs. Broon's driver was about to rein out for the return, the old captain shouting from his carriage that it was "best to get up the mountain before dark," when Dr. Smiles did not dart — the doctor glided always, where other men would dart or step out boldly, — but glided to the side of the dray, with :

"Ah, my d-e-a-r Mrs. Lane! A most unexpected pleasure." At the the same time taking up that lady's hand before she could raise it from her lap.

"Drop anchor, Tom!"

Laura overheard the old captain's roar to the driver.

"You'll swamp the — the man alongside the ladies."

Laura did not need to look over her shoulder. She recognized the first voice, with a shudder indescribable. But the second voice was such a

great refuge. The smooth tones, then the rough tones. The mean and the manly. The very voices seemed to the young wife to grapple with each other in the air of nightfall. She knew the two speakers had never met till this moment, and that it was almost too dark for the old captain to read the features at the carriage side. Therefore, it must have been an intuitive recognition on the captain's part, or else a disrelish of the doctor's voice that provoked such severity in the old man's tones.

"Stop, coachman," Laura said promptly. "Heaven hide me. What a day this!"

Then realizing to whom she was speaking, she strove to appear calm before her servant. But it seemed more than the young heart could contain. This being ensnared again, on her poor mother's account, by the evil genius whom she had for some hours put clean out of her world; this, after all that the day had done since sunrise to thrill every sensibility of her being!

"Oh, thank God, it is rugged captain Broon who faces him this time," she thought. "How often I have wished these two men could meet, and the true one annihilate the false one! But this is not the place, nor the time."

She flew after Mark and nestled in his pro-

tection; and then, alas, flew back again to this carriage seat, where her body had been all the time.

"Why, good Dr. Smiles, you here?"

It was Mrs. Lane's quite cordial reply. Then continuing, the lady introduced him all round.

"Yes, I am here," the man resumed, one hand holding a spoke of the wheel, and the other attempting again to get the lady's hand. "You are aware that I am prospecting up here for a site. I am still intending to found my great Remedial Cosmopolitan, Religio-magnetic Institute amid these salubrious mountains, kind friends."

"Ah, doctor, still engaged in your great benevolent work, I see," Mrs. Lane replied, beginning to fan herself excitedly.

"Precisely thus," he answered.

Then, hoping that it was safe to do so, judging from the eager interest in her face, he released the carriage wheel and put his thumbs together, rolling them in the old manner, and saying:

"I supposed you must have been informed of our continued tarry in the mountains by Miss Laura —"

"'Miss?' Did you say 'Miss,' my friend?"

The father had so completely taken his son's wife into his heart, that he was promptly jealous over Smiles' ignorance.

"Yes, sir. I have the honor to know this lady's daughter very well. Indeed, I may say she and my son — "

"Your son, friend?"

The captain's good-natured roar was louder than usual, for even he was now somewhat warm with excitement and decidedly fretted with impatience to be gone. Then to listen to the doctor's last was too much.

"Your son, sir? Why, it is my son! He's the hero, God bless him! We have just sent the boy to — God only knows what. And there sits his wife! Do you know that yonder young lady is my son's wife?"

Smiles started as if he had been struck. Indeed, he was struck. There was a sharp little crack as Mrs. Lane's fan descended, all too familiarly, so others thought, on his shoulder, and the lady leaned over the side of the vehicle to say:

"It is true, doctor. Laura and young Mr. Broon were married this very noon! It was very sudden." And she put the spread fan to her lips as she presumed to add confidingly, "Come up

to Eaglecroft to-morrow, and I'll tell you all about it. Do now. I shall need your professional services after this day."

"Glad to see you, my friend," said the captain, promptly seizing the opportunity. "Glad to see you any day, or the family will be, for I may be away. But I see my son's wife has driven off, and we — you must excuse our haste to get up the hill, sir, before it lowers darker."

With a bound the restless horses tore away after the lighter vehicle, which was already spinning up the village street far in front of them. The old captain was the very soul of hospitality and old-time politeness, always after his own rough, kind fashion, and it offended his own sense of propriety a little to look back, on second thought, and see Dr. Smiles still standing nonplused where the carriage had left him. So he turned apologetically to Mrs. Lane, saying:

"Your friend will come aboard us at Eaglecroft, madam, of course. You see, Laura sailed off, and I wanted to keep in her wake. A great doctor, you say?"

"Yes," was the faint answer.

"Oh, captain," exclaimed Madge Hardy, excitedly, "I do so hope he will not. I just think him a horrid man, and his son is — is — Aun-

tie," — for the young girl caught sight of something in her aunt's face — "forgive me, auntie. We shall never agree about that — that gentleman and his son. But it will never do now, you yourself must know, auntie, for — oh dear!"

She hid her confusion in a sudden turn aside.

Captain Charles — as we may designate him till Captain Mark wins a higher title, if he ever does — looked hard at the two ladies, and meanwhile finally settled his own instinctive suspicions of the doctor into confirmed aversion. It was marvelous, the woman-like intuitions of this stout old dreamer of the sea. He was so pure, so true, and so unselfish himself that his recoil from the reverse in character was as prompt as it was just. Indeed, his friends came to regard and use him like a divining rod, in business and elsewhere, wherewith to read men; while his own family trusted the reflections of his face, confronting strangers, like a mirror. Mrs. Broon read it now in the half-lights of twilight and the summer moon, and took quiet alarm on Mrs. Lane's account. As for Laura, why, she was beyond danger or solicitude, in the good step-mother's mind, being wedded wife these six hours.

After a long silence, which everybody observed, as they began to ascend the mountain, Captain Charles drew a deep breath, and said:

"A great doctor. Ye-a-s."

He had a peculiar way of drawling out that affirmative particle thoughtfully and conclusively, yet with a shade of no in it. The family always interpreted the drawled yes or no.

"A religio-hyfaluten, low-rigged, fore-and-aft sort of a what, did he say?"

As no one else seemed likely to answer, his wife said, quietly:

"Remedial Institution, father. Let's drop the subject."

"Ye-a-s. I suppose that young gentleman who approached him as we left him, hull down, was his son, eh, Miss Madge?"

"Do, father, let us change the subject," earnestly remonstrated Mrs. Broon; for, with a woman's instinct, she read Mrs. Lane's troubled and excited frame of mind. "Tom, we must keep young Mrs. Broon in sight. Don't you see how she flies up the mountain?"

So let her fly; for she and you and I know that it is best — if, indeed, it will avail her.

No sooner had this young wife disappeared from his sight, than Dr. Smiles turned and

beckoned to Erastus. The son approached promptly; and the depot being a quiet and neglected spot now, the two sat down upon a pile of railway ties.

"Married!"

The thumbs wanted all the fingers to help press, in this press of ill fortune, and it seemed difficult for once to match the finger tips just to a hair.

"Married?"

"Since the sun rose; and he's gone to these noble wars, to be her hero and idol."

"I told you we should fail, father."

Erastus bit a cigar in two and chewed the fragments with his lips, not his teeth. Then he said, for the doctor was saying nothing:

"I shall now get out of this vicinity and this business, leaving the smart boy to the spoils of his victory, if he ever gets back to enjoy them."

This with a sort of desperate decision that looked almost as well as a decent manly resolve.

"But you cannot get out."

The thumbs were set, and the black eyes were set, too, hard on Erastus, though at a side glance.

Erastus' lips exploded like a bomb!

At the same time he exclaimed, starting to his feet:

"You do not mean me to attempt plotting with another man's wife!"

"But I mean to build my fortunes by building my Sanitarium. And please do not profane, Erastus. One's habits in privacy become his slips in public. But as regard this borrowed money, — and I must have money—"

Then he lapsed into silence, he and his thumbs.

Erastus straddled, and waited for his father to resume. After a few moments he ventured to ask:

"Do you see your way clear, father?"

"And this war business is going to make widows, I calculate. This wedded maid may yet be — that is, the chances of war may prove one man's folly and another's wisdom, eh?"

Erastus Smiles was American born. He had not mingled with this day's scenes altogether unmoved. This deliberate calculation of his father on the possible death of patriot soldiers shocked him.

"Great Heavens, father! It would be worth your life to manifest, in this vicinity, such a spirit as prompted that last remark."

"Hear me, you."

The doctor was now on his feet and confronting his son. Indeed, he put one of his long arms on the young man's shoulder; his arm, not his hand, which protruded beyond, where the fingers worked in the air. He spoke in very solemn accents and very deep tones; but he was none the less infuriate.

"I shall use that borrowed money. Of course it was borrowed. You know that it was freely loaned. Eventually it must be repaid, it seems, since the only heir is not to be your wife."

"Oh, ho! Then it was your fortunes that were to be mended, and not mine to be made, I see."

"Erastus, my son, you enrage me, but that I school myself to keep the commandment. You have never rebelled against me before. I'll put you under the power of spirits, here and now, if necessary."

The young man shrunk against the pile of ties as if affrighted. The doctor was prompt to go on, saying:

"Now it flashes on me as I talk. These enthusiastic fools, my countrymen, will see years of this precious heroism. That gives me time. I, meanwhile, war a grander crusade against disease —"

"Don't put that on now, father, for we are alone."

"Meanwhile," the doctor continued with shameless pretence, "I become the philanthropist of these hills. That woman — the mother, I mean — will become an inmate of my — excuse me, our — institution. With becoming gratitude she may remember her good physician in her will, if she drops off. Or, if she is in our house, you see, or we are in her house, any earlier pressure for payments, if urged by relatives, would not effect her. You see?"

"But this only heir, the wife of one very fiery man, and daughter-in-law of another very determined man, father?"

"Ah, I welcome you again into partnership. You have not then turned quite a fool, I see. I feared, almost, at one time to-day that you might enlist. Think that over, my boy. Think that point over, about the young woman. I relegate some things to you. Why, boy, I recognize my own child in you again."

Erastus was glad it was now the full obscurity of night, else those sharp eyes must have read the weary disgust which unbent for a moment his young face. The thought that "a father could so relentlessly debauch his own

child. He would make me as much his child in spirit as I am in the flesh. Here and now, then, I must close my last door of escape back to decency."

But quickly suspicious at the son's silence, the sire asked abruptly:

"Do you see your way clear in any degree, my son?"

"It is a perilous road, sir," very gravely.

"Not perilous, but somewhat ticklish. You are particularly to note who are to be my patrons. I seek religious patronage, as I always have. All clergymen will be admitted to our establishment upon the most favorable, — indeed, I may say, merely nominal terms. We shall put ourselves above suspicion by the cultivation of the most proper patronage, as I said. How many, many there are, in these great cities — sit down again, Erastus, and I'll tell you my plans, — how many world-weary people are tired of the hilarities of the world's watering places! Ah, me! My generous purpose shall serve them. There shall be no card-playing, for instance. How is that for a card, eh?"

"That's what it is, father; for you have no conscience about the game of cards," replied Erastus, fairly amused by the suggestion as coming from such a source.

"And, then, no dancing in the parlors."

"What?"

Erastus gave one short laugh in spite of himself.

"Why, no dancing, I said. We will put a pipe organ, a regular church music affair, into that alcove at the end of the south parlor. I've arranged it all in mind, you see. There'll be no dancing to such music, and no questions asked. Not a piano in the house, sir, nor a horn, nor a fiddle. Then I will be saved all questions."

"But, doctor, where did you get all these notions? These are not your sentiments."

"No; it's other people's sentiments I'm consulting, at four dollars a day, you see. Why, I thought you knew me better. But I forgot that your mother has had the handling of you, as of the other children. I now take you into partnership; you are old enough."

This hideous process of a child's debauching was not offensive to the old man. It is not to the very, very sharp banker who initiates his son into the dubious methods of the house; nor to the unscrupulous merchant who whispers for the first time the questionable secrets of the trade to his son, just made a partner, and whose verdant honesty must be checked in season; nor

yet to the decidedly hard manufacturer, who has read in his son's face, for a year past, a detection of paternal extortions and methods not accordant with the teachings of the Sunday-school, and which the father thinks best now to confess without defending. Let the young man make the most of it. All this wretched business is familiar in certain quarters. A bad man knows well enough when his child detects him; indeed, knew all along that the child would sometime find out just the man his father really was. A bad man accepts this shame as part of his moral bankruptcy. Frequently, as in this case, he makes a desperate virtue of necessity, and selects one of his sons as his successor, relegating the other children to a good mother's shaping. The final process of paternal and formal initiation is, however, a fearful ordeal to the child.

"Frankly instructed in cold, deliberate selfishness, fraud, stinginess, greed or charlatanry, — and by father!"

Many times had this thought broken out in audible soliloquy from Erastus Smiles' lips.

"Promoted to be father's lieutenant in lying manœuvres and mean stratagems for other men's hurt, and the family's enriching!"

And that, too, not in the vulgar strata of Bax-

ter street, but in the best circles of Murray Hill, Beacon Hill, Chestnut Hill, and other Palatine hills, done by hypocrites who give in church and steal by the million on change; who bribe courts and purchase legislators; who throw a sop to a college and hoodwink the good men of the missionary society; and who, growing weary, wish a confidant, growing old, wish a successor, — — and take one of their sons.

Fearful, heart-breaking, unendurable induction this, if sudden, — which it generally is not, the boy having had his suspicions all along. Yet, at the best, most trying; as now, to Erastus Smiles, whom the reader would not have judged exceeding fine-grained.

Indeed, the young fellow sunk down beside his father, in the gloom of night, as if he had fallen into a bottomless pit. That he was amused, was his salvation that he did not go mad; and his laughter over his father's hypocrisy was moreover the sign of desperate surrender to be an evil-minded man.

"Yes, Erastus," the doctor proceeded, "no cards, no billiards, no dancing, no croquet — "

"Oh, ho!"

"No smoking — "

Erastus shouted till the echo from the black

depot gable flew back and slapped them in the face.

"Then I suppose, locking the office door at times, you'll lie on your back, dear father, on the floor, and smoke up the grate. Why, you inveterate smoker, you'll die!"

"Erastus, don't be a fool! It's other people's smoking I'm forbidding, at four dollars per diem. Ah, the dear patients who cannot bear smoking! I entrap you! I make a paradise for you. We post this up on the walls; we print it in circulars along with the proper specification that no guests will be expected to arrive or depart on the Sabbath."

Erastus did not laugh at this last. He hid his face in his hands. The father knew what was in the boy's mind. It was the picture of mother, a gentle, Christian soul, a lover of "the Lord's day," of whose sacredness she was ever whispering to her children.

"And no liquors!" the doctor added.

Then turning to Erastus, who still preserved his bowed silence, he asked:

"What's the matter, my son? Would n't that please her?"

The son fairly groaned.

"Yes, father; that is her line, only she goes so much beyond in her preaching!"

Then turning sharply about, the son put his hand on his father's knee and added, with great fervency:

"Oh, my father, is not she a noble soul? Mother! Why, she is like a clean sunbeam falling down upon a mud heap, such as — as I am. When I think of her, sir, I know there must be a good God from whom she came, and a pure religion of the Christ, for she has it in her soul; and a true church of which she at least is a member —"

"Am I not also a member?" asked this man, imperturbably.

"Don't, father! Spare me! I cannot go with you any further to-night. Why, I have seen the time, sir, when I have given a boyish blow to the fellow who charged you with a mercenary use of your church membership. But now you frankly number it among your assets in this business!"

"Erastus," — the doctor got to his feet and coolly studied his watch by the moon meanwhile, — "we will leave it all till after we have slept. Why, it is eleven o'clock. The soldier-boy is far on his way. You will get courage to go on your way by the morning. Indeed, there is no such thing as getting out of the way, child You and I are partners."

The speaker lighted a fresh cigar, and walked on by the young man's side towards the hotel.

"Smoke?" he asked, opening his case.

"No, thank you, sir."

Then after a few moments' silence:

"Father, do you know how sometimes, by way of—of—"—he hardly ventured to say "contrast,"—"of memory, I suppose, merely to mention mother controls me? What I mean is, for instance, the idea of a cigar, even, which she abominates, seems to me abominable. Dancing, cards, the sanctity of Sabbath: I know how conscientious she is on all these things; she believes they hurt and dissuade young people from the practice of pure religion undefiled. Father! Father! Believe me; there are times when her gentle purity, so linked in with deeds of pity to the poor and charity for all sinners, offers a blessed tyranny even in things non-essential over my poor soul and body. I would to God Almighty I were such a son as she would have me!"

Unbroken silence was the reply.

"You will forgive me, sir, if I grow bold," resumed the son. "I do not forget that you are my father, and as long as a child lives, she herself has taught me how I should try to honor you."

"Try to?"

It crackled forth, but nothing more than that echo.

"Yes, sir. My dear, dear sir. May I say this one last word, that I have never said before? Father, stop!"

They came to a pause in the dark roadway.

"What do you suppose is in mother's heart, as her God reads its sadness, when she thinks of your way of getting a living?"

With his cold smile:

"Erastus, most men of my stripe manage to get angels for wives."

Erastus caught his breath, then he stammered out:

"And what do these angels do?"

"They enjoy this life by praying for our safe and eternal continuance, strange to say," puffing a cloud towards the clouds.

"Father!"

"Erastus," said the doctor, laying his straightened arm on his son's shoulder and working the fingers, "I love your mother devotedly. I have just paid fifteen hundred dollars for her new coupé lined in maroon satin. I enjoy imagining how she will look in it. Good night. Go to bed. I'll sit down and finish my cigar."

He suited action to words, throwing himself on the settee of the hotel veranda. The young man went to his room.

"I think he'll swing into line," ruminated the doctor, and talking to the shadows of the summer midnight. "I think so. But there's more of this folly which is called manly honor to the boy than I supposed. He seems to be changing. These good mothers! there's no measurement to their influence. They grip an affectionate boy hard."

X.

THE BRIDE'S CONFESSION.

WHEN Laura Broon awoke the next morning, her eyes wandered around the splendid apartment which the young owner had chosen as his own. The windows faced the sunrise and the towering masses which constitute Mt. Washington. In a chamber upon a mountain-top, where the day-break would awaken a sleeper early and thoroughly, you would say, yet the lady seemed to herself in dream-land. She gazed hard at the rifles and fishing-tackle in one corner, at the long riding boots in another corner, at the patent bit and a shoe of a favorite mare hung over the gas-jet, at pictures of her husband's gentlemen friends on the mantle, and then at her own photograph in a place of honor.

The look about the room was the slow dawning of the new life which the young girl had now entered upon and must try to realize. The events of yesterday were but a confused mass

of swift memories. That sudden telegram at noon; the hurried robing for a soldier's wedding; the fond farewell interview with her husband on the veranda below; the flight down the mountain and his eager patriotic going forth for country, all in half a transit of the summer's sun.

For a moment or two, this morning, she was almost piqued that he could have been so ardent for country as to choose it before her. Presently, however, she saw another side of the picture and began to feel the flush of patriotism herself kindling from the embers of yesterday. Then she fell a dreaming about her lover-husband's whereabouts that very moment, and, dwelling on his truth and manliness and love for her, she soon got the temper for a woman's "crying spell," that blessing denied to man.

Rising now and dressing, she seemed to look the New Life full in the face, as she saw herself arranging her hair at the mirror that never reflected her face before.

"It was curious," she said to the face in the mirror, "that Captain Charles should have insisted on my coming into this room, now, wasn't it? What did he say about my being mistress of the establishment, and finding all the

call-bells here? Yes, there they are," and she turned her about to read the names, "HOUSEKEEPER," "CHAMBERMAIDS," etc., written over them.

"But then, I know they were never used yet. Mark's mother has been at the head of the house. Why, I'm afraid of them."

She stepped over and put out her pretty fingers towards the knobs as yet never used. Then she flew back again to her winding of the long thick braids of her hair before the image of the New Life in the mirror.

The cheeks of the New Life were very much flushed, she saw, and its white arms trembled. Evidently the New Life was deeply concerned about many things. She spoke to it again.

"Very curious, or very old fashioned, was it not, that the old captain should have directed, so matter-of-course, that I was to be shown to Mark's room?

The New Life nodded its head.

"Or, was it to do me honor beyond measure, and before everyone, at the very beginning?"

The New Life put its hands down from its head and again assented.

"Or, was it done in the desperate loneliness of his dear old heart, that couldn't endure the room empty?"

The New Life was uncertain. It gazed hard at her, and its eyes began to fill again with tears; its hand rapped the brush sharply on the marble, and suddenly with energy demanded:

"Are you his wife? Mark Broon's, Captain Mark Broon's wife?"

There must have been pretty and proud assertion in the speaker's face as she stood piercing the New Life through with the glances, the tears drying in the gaze. At all events the New Life asserted it.

"Now you are certain," after a little she resumed to the image, her toilet having received its last deliberate touches, "certain that there was nothing suspicious in Captain Charles separating Madge Hardy and me, asking Madge to be a good daughter to mamma? Captain Charles can read mamma: he can read anyone. He would not, now, would he? Suppose it was desirable to prevent collision between poor foolish mamma, inviting that bad doctor here, and me, his son's wife!"

The New Life was greatly troubled, and seemed to recede from view at the very mention of the doctor's name. Laura sat down by herself before the wide windows. The silence of the great house indicated late slumber on the

part of the other occupants. She came to a prompt decision upon two earliest duties with which to accompany the New Life down stairs. She would first seek her mother, and prevent absolutely any hospitality to Dr. Smiles and his son. She would go frankly to her husband's father, and, at any length he might desire, explain all her unfortunate previous association, and her mother's, both with Erastus Smiles and his father.

Suiting action to word, Laura resolutely marched into the hall and towards her mother's chamber. Upon second thought, the very early hour occurred to her, and she consumed the time in maturing her message as she walked softly back and forth.

After a while she entered Mrs. Lane's room, and affectionately saluting her cousin, she sat down on the bed beside her mother, stroking her forehead and beginning very resolutely:

"Mamma dear, Eaglecroft, which is now my own home, you know," — and she had to stop right here to shower more kisses on the poor pale face — "Eaglecroft air is better for you than all the doctors. You will be dining with us, with wonderful appetite, this noon. It's real old fashioned dinner at mid-day. But, mamma,

what I want to say most, and must say, I, the mistress of this house,"—and she laughed prettily enough, though not quite naturally, at the same time pressing her forefinger on her mother's chin, and asking, "Why don't you laugh, mamma?—I, the mistress of this house, wish to say that Dr. Smiles must not come over the "WELCOME" woven on the front-hall mat! There!"

She was a good mind to cry, the next instant, at the thought of having virtually issued actual and peremptory commands to her mother; but then she bethought her of the really serious import of the whole business, and concluded that the New Life must n't cry here.

To her inexpressible relief, Mrs. Lane instantly responded, in faint tones:

"Of course not, my dear child. I fully understand your position, and am not so foolish as to wreck, or even imperil, the happiness of my only child."

A perfect surprise! When they had taken a moment to realize it, the enthusiasm of the two young girls, the merry shout of Madge Hardy as she danced about the room, the radiant gratitude which Laura's overbending face poured down on her mother, drove all serious business out of that room for a time.

As soon as she could get a hearing, Mrs. Lane added:

"You see, girls, that I freely confess to a mystical power of the unseen world which that man is always able to exert over me when in his presence."

"But — but, mamma dear, it is only when in his presence," exclaimed Laura. "And now, then, when he attempts to call to-day, or at any time, let Captain Broon meet him, while we excuse ourselves. What care we if it seem rude? One cannot be rude, no matter how peremptory, with such a man."

"Such a man, indeed!" put in Madge Hardy. How withering can a delicate and refined woman make that phrase. "*Such* a man!" A ton trip-hammer could not more surely annihilate the wretch.

Laura looked her thanks to her pretty cousin, and promptly resumed:

"And now, little mother, I must refer that question of the borrowed money—"

"Hush! Are we certain that we loaned money? Actually loaned any?"

The widow's gaze, under her hand, which she placed edgewise, as a shield above her peering eyes, was utterly miserable in its confusion.

She arched her neck as if, through the open window, seeking to descry the distant farm-house down in the morning-flooded valley.

"The fog has not yet lifted, mamma," said Laura, divining her mother's thoughts. "I could not see the old home, though I tried as soon as I awoke. But you may be sure it is standing there. He has not stolen it yet. And, mamma dear, if you cannot quite recollect just what we said and did, whether we signed any papers or not, is not that very confusion an added reason why we should instantly have the help of a clear, strong masculine mind? Men know so much more than we do."

"Ah, indeed, you charming married woman!" exclaimed Madge Hardy, roguishly.

"Well, about business, men do, I mean," replied Laura, blushing. "And, Madge, you may as well know all about it, too, this entanglement of ours; the more who know such dark tricks the better," which had the effect of keeping the chatterbox quiet for a moment, though Laura did not proceed to gratify her cousin's curiosity at once, but addressed herself anew to the task of convincing her mother of the propriety and need of confiding in Captain Broon, her father-in-law.

"But you will make him despise me, my child," the elder lady protested. "You know what an orthodox he is. Why, the very thought of these strange isms, as he called them the other evening, you remember, nearly made the dear old gentleman forget his manners. And I still think he sullied his hospitality a little in his outbreak over my simple remark. Have n't I," and she actually raised herself on her elbow, "as good a right to my religious opinions as he has to his?"

"Religious opinions, indeed!" thought Madge Hardy, her kind commiseration showing in her face, though she said nothing.

What could surpass the obdurate contempt with which a bred-in-the-bone child of "the standing order," the old historic Puritan church of New England, regarded every other belief? Of unreasoning, yet not contrary to reason, if uninquiring; yet received on ancient testimony perfectly proper and perfectly secure, the faith of the Puritans. Young thing that she was, Madge Hardy's great eyes seemed to reiterate it:

"Religious! Anything but religious, auntie, we all think; and we pity you so much!"

"Please don't let's debate, mamma dear,"

pleaded Laura, with many a skilful caress of persuasion. "At all events a new departure is open for me. God pity me, I have no beliefs; none to cast off, none to sincerely take on. No, no, mamma, I do not mean to upbraid you for my rearing. Only I can't help thinking that my blank soul would offend the dear captain as much as your contrary opinions."

Then she fell into silence for some moments, thinking on the second and perhaps graver part of her proposed confession to her husband's father.

Meanwhile, Madge took up the arguments with the invalid as to "letting this strong old man into the secret of all business troubles, as a good auntie ought long ago to have done with her own brother, papa."

Mrs. Lane made no reply to this little thrust; but catching at Laura's hand as it was softly stroking her own, while its owner sat so long silent and dreaming towards the open window, she suddenly said:

"Well, Laura, you will do as you think best as to the business part of our problem. But will you think it necessary to portray your mother and yourself as such rank heretics?"

"I am determined to put myself just right

with this family, mamma," was the softly determined reply.

"But is the trifle of your religious belief of such importance, if the father is the noble-hearted man you all say he is?"

"Not of itself, perhaps," replied Laura, "except in these times, when a man like Mark's father is bending like my great maple tree in a wind storm, with emotion, and, as I believe, is praying to his God in every other breath, for his country and his son, his only child. Why, Mark told me that his father gave two thousand dollars towards the equipment of the company. He is utterly unfitted for business. He walked the veranda last night, I am sure, long after we were in bed. His eyes fill as he talks to himself over the newspapers. Will you ever forget that prayer of his last night? And I, who do not — that is, I fear I do not — know how to pray at all, feel like a traitor in the house."

"And then, again," Madge ventured, "the question of faith is no trifle. It has divided a nation before now. But you believe all right, Laura dear; I'm sure you do. It is n't as if Mark had married a Roman Catholic."

"Mark and his father respect Catholics!" ex-

claimed Laura. "I have occasion to know that it is the people of no belief whom they de—"

"Despise?" asked Madge with a little spark in her tones, for Laura had spoken positively. "No, no. Forgive me. We will not have a woman's war over it. But you are not that bad kind."

Then she put her arms about her cousin's neck and continued:

"I see how it all is. You cannot tell about the property trouble, I suppose, without explaining how you came to be associated with this doctor. Well, go tell it. Tell everything that troubles you. There never was a truer heart than this old sea dog, as he calls himself. Funny name, is n't it? Come, here it is time, almost, for the mistress of the house, I should say, to take a peep below stairs. I 'm not going to argue this question longer. Auntie, we must leave Laura to do as she thinks best."

"Which she certainly intends to do, mamma dear," added Laura, impressively. "For she has this new life to live, now, the truest and best way she can. God help her!"

She arose to her feet, and seemed wonderfully imposing in her quiet resolution.

"Say that often. That's a good prayer," whispered Madge.

"That is my tronble," responded the beautiful girl, flushing over the confession. "I have not said it a dozen times in as many years!"

And she was gone from the room instantly, to avoid further reply from the orthodox maiden.

It was, however, not till after breakfast that Laura found Captain Charles alone. He was sitting in the library, opening his mail, and rose with dignified cordiality to meet her, saying:

"Good morning, my child. I was about to send for you. Here is a telegram, to which you have the first right now."

He said that difficult word bravely and sincerely — than which parents of newly-wed children find no harder word, "the first right now."

She read it eagerly and aloud. It briefly told of the company's safe arrival at the State camp at Brattleboro; that Mark was well and expected to leave for "the seat of war" within forty-eight hours.

"So you see, my dear, that disarranges our plans about spending a few days with him in the regimental camp," promptly remarked Mr. Broon, and with decided disappointment.

The mere mention of such an unexpected pleasure, now pronounced impossible in the same breath, almost disconcerted the young wife. But she soon got courage for her errand, and, after asking if he had an hour to spare her, which of course he had, she got into the corner of the sofa opposite his easy chair and began her story.

At first he gave her a half-amused and half-puzzled attention, yet the very soul of indulgent good-nature, till he suddenly shook his head laughingly, and interrupted her with:

"But, my dear girl, it's no matter about this other young man now. You are not the first pretty girl that has sailed out o' harbor with a fleet, and finally took one for consort. Your Mark is no jealous fellow. Ah, the dear boy!"

Then her task grew more difficult. But with feathers smoothed, and some courage yet to spare, she went on to portray more and more of the strange power over her mother that "this unscrupulous doctor" seemed to exercise.

"But what's that to do with you, or your mother, now, child?" asked the captain, leaning forward, and using his great arm like a sickle, a favorite gesture, by the way, with him when very positive.

She plucked at the fringe on the arm of the sofa, and resumed:

"As a downright honest woman, sir, I should tell you of a miserable scene in my mother's house, the very day we were to come here; a scene fit for a mad-house, I should say; which my husband ought to have known about, only there was no time; yet if he knew it — if you knew it, sir, I'm sure you would regard my mother and myself with the utmost contempt, unless your pity softened you."

"This is very serious language, my dear woman."

"Under the influence of this man, my mother thought she saw my dead father — "

"What! Heaven help my old ears!"

"And there was a paper written by this man —"

"Which your mother was asked to sign?"

"And which she cannot tell whether she did sign or not."

"Gracious! Gracious! And which it don't matter whether she signed or not, under such circumstances!"

His clenched hand fell on the table like a load of rock.

"Oh, do you indeed say so, sir!" eagerly responded Laura.

He looked gravely round on her, from his savage glare at the book-cases, and remarked pitifully:

"And does that assurance concerning your property afford you such relief?"

Wait a bit, young Mrs. Broon. You cannot afford to tangle the skein further, by indulging indignation. Hence, softly and with self-control:

"And is it not something, sir, to know that, with all the rest of this bad business, my husband is not to be obliged to support my penniless mother?"

"Why, yes, child. Yes, you are right, I see. Yet the thought of that vulgar preacher of some horrid nonsense winding his coils round my — but I'm selfish in that. How I loathe this sort of people, for your dear sake as much as mine and my son's."

"I know you do, sir. Believe me, I know it. And so do I loathe them! Yet think how wretched is a poor young wife's dilemma. It is my own mother who has become involved in this wild folly on one hand. On the other hand is my husband of a day, whose love for me must have somehow made me seem just a little worthy of him; he is snatched far away from me, and I must try to — try to win my place

in this house, through you, sir, in whom I confide."

"Confide?" he replied with a look of alarm. "Yet no one ever asked to confide in Charles Broon and was turned away," he continued softly and thinking aloud, "or was betrayed in his confidences," with the heavy fist striking the table, "only—"

Silence.

"Only it seems shocking to you, sir, that a wife of another man, and that man your idolized son, should need to impart unpleasant confidences to you."

"Why, yes, my dear woman; I think all this should have been arranged between you and your husband."

"But it was a time of war, sir."

"Yes, yes; and you wanted to make sure—"

"Sir!"

She was on her feet. She flushed and throbbed. Her trembling limbs almost took the fatal first steps of flight. But there was such a look of pain on his massive features, and there was such a pathless wilderness stretching out before her if she really did take those first steps that, standing, she almost sobbed it:

"You do not, cannot blame a woman for trying to gain one she loved."

He got out of his chair and took her two hands, exclaiming fervently:

"Why, no, child, I believe you. Who could help loving him? There, there! Let it all go now. It's not necessary to show your log to me. You and Mark can sail your own craft. Say you forgive me. There!"

"If you would only take me to him, sir," she added, with unspeakable distress.

"Yes, yes, I know, I know. You carry lots of canvas, pretty one," holding her off and admiring her, with returning confidence beginning to beam in his face. "Take you? Would God I could! Who could deny you? I will, I will! So there! Now you just keep within hailing distance of the mercy seat of Heaven till we see the dear boy. Indeed, we must see him before he goes into battle. Sit down now and tell me. Your mother has some property besides the farm, you said."

But the storm could not clear so abruptly as that. Men of affairs are self-controlled by long training. Not so our dear women. Sometimes it seems as if it would take forever and a day for the sun to break through again after an hour of woman's weeping.

Laura resumed her seat, to be sure; but

there was now a perfect storm of tears behind the handkerchief, and sobs that to most good men are simply alarming. Captain Charles was thoroughly alarmed for her; he believed her heart would break; he was certain he had killed her. You see he had never had a daughter of his own. As for the two good women, his wives, only ten days in port, once in two months, they were an Elysium dream to the sailor; all his life long, till he began "stopping ashore," he felt himself a cruel affliction on the happiness of women and children by the anxiety which he inflicted on them while at sea. He often used to wonder how they ever could forgive him and indulge him so when at home.

"Oh, you women!" he exclaimed, helplessly. "God bless you. You are too good for us rough men. I shall never get your bearin's. Come, now. It's a stern chase with my old heart, but I love the beautiful girl. God knows I only live to make ye all happy."

This was too much. Down came the handkerchief promptly. She sprung at his last question instantly, and resumed her purpose to confide all to him.

"Yes, we have about twenty-five thousand dollars. Squire Lecey in the village has gener-

ally managed the business where mamma could not."

"I'll see the square, and block the fraud," said the captain, with a tone of measureless relief, turning to business, writing the name and making the memorandum of his plan at once. "And it could not honestly have been more than a check for payment for professional services," he wrote on, speaking his plan aloud.

Suddenly it flashed upon the young woman again that she had only begun her story. She burst out with:

"Why, Captain, the man has been trying to enlist mamma in his great curative establishment, and perhaps—"

"Perhaps has got a big subscription from her," growled the writer, glancing up.

"Indeed, I fear that is just it. How quickly you see it all. Yes, the man has been admiring the farm—"

"And has got her to deed it to him for the infernal institution!" shouted the captain, the right arm swinging like a scythe now.

He looked the startled girl full in the face for a moment with a blank stare. Then a cloud of disgust began unmistakably to return over his features, as the complexity of the possible situation dawned more fully on him.

"Thick weather! Nasty, thick weather! And right here in port, too! Aground in the harbor!"

"What do you mean?" she asked timidly.

"Why, to think of my son's wife bein' involved in such a mess. The lyin' hypocrite alongside here, right down in the valley," he answered, thoughtfully studying the carpet.

I admire this young girl just here: that she did not again resent his remarks; that she read him with a woman's intuition, and knew that he was kinder than his words; that she set it all down in the account of the old man's life-long offence at sight of fraud and religious pretense; that she even envied him his religious respectability, in contrast with her own hap-hazard training. I admire her that she did not dash all her hopes and theirs to the ground, wreck her possible happiness and theirs, here and now, and dislike this man, leave the house and go to ruin.

She might have done all this two days before. But that marriage ceremony is a mighty thing. It chains one. One is careful now. One must get through this.

With no little self-possession and self-respect in her tone:

"But you will shield us, sir. It is a woman's right to ask that of a strong, true man."

He turned sharply away and walked to the window. He stood there some seconds, that seemed hours, then walking heavily back to his seat, he answered her:

"I will! But your mother must never see that man again."

"She shall not!" answered Laura.

"And as for yourself, my dear woman—"

How persistently he called her "woman" in the gravity of his address; and she seemed to herself to grow older and more courageous with its every utterance.

"You will see the propriety of imparting everything 'bout this young Smiles to your husband."

"Would that I was in a wife's shelter, her husband's presence!"

"Right! But it's war-times. So write him."

"There's nothing to write on that score. Dear Mark knows that I repudiated the professed and boasted engagement with Erastus Smiles."

She had said it! In a moment she both regretted and approved of the remark.

"Engagement? Boasted? Heaven have mercy! You don't say that this chap thought he had any claims on you?"

Poor old man. Your good years have been too many since you were a boy. You are becoming terribly involved in the effort to play the part of your son, the young husband of this perplexed young creature. And your pride of family, however admirable in its place — how carefully you reared the boy, God knows, and how noble your ambition for him, — may be just in your way now, turning to your walk again, face purpling and heart heavily beating.

Her girlish wit showed her the absurdity of allowing the dear gentlemen to engage by proxy in a matter of love's jealousy, and she smilingly remarked:

"But you made light of all that, sir, a moment ago, saying something about young people walking down the harbor in a fleet."

"Walking down the harbor? Sailing, child. I said 'sailing.' Yes, yes."

And he got a rough smile on.

"You are right. Only let's just leave those people absolutely to themselves. Or, rather, leave them to me. There, there! I'll defend you and your property. I'm an old bungler, anyway, in young people's affairs. You just keep on your present tack. We'll overhaul our boy, down in Washington, by next week, as I promised you. Here, kiss me, my daughter."

Which she did, rising to meet him, and walking now with him across the room. He continued to talk. He would "put all this matter in the hands of his attorney. They would shut the house up here. Mrs. Lane should accompany them to New York, at all events." And now if Laura "would but trust in God, all would soon come out well."

"Trust in God?"

Several times, as they crossed the room, her lips silently repeated those words. As they passed out to the veranda, she still turned that expression over in her thoughts, as the old man fell to relating incidents of his boy's youth and rattled on in doting biography. She was interested of course; and of course he knew that she was interested. Father and bride communing of absent son and husband. Yet, perhaps, he noticed that she was abstracted too; for after a while he paused, seating himself on the rail and looking away to the southward, over the dim, blue mountains, and exclaimed:

"God keep him! God keep him! In times like these, how could a father live without a trust in God!"

Transparent face of hers. Silent lips of hers. Tearful eyes of hers. He saw something, at least,

in these tokens, and asked her the question, or she would not have ventured to load an added burden on to his faith in her.

"You pray, daughter, do n't you?"

She had never loved him so well, nor feared him so much, till that question, asked in deep and tender tones.

"I wish I did!" she answered.

"Is it possible?" the old man remarked, reflectively, gazing on her sweet and downcast face, the tears starting through her long lashes and wetting her cheeks. "Is it possible, my poor, dear one!"

And he grew calmer in his honest pity with every breath. The nervous unrest under which he had been suffering through all their interview instantly gave way to a deep repose. He had forgotten himself, forgotten his son, forgotten his country, all in a moment, the grand old Christian, at sight of this beautiful young girl, moaning out that touching wish which was so pitiful a confession.

"Yes, it is possible; for I—I have no beliefs whatever, sir!"

She spoke it so desperately, as if all her hopes died in the words. She had not dared to look him in the face before; but her despair

gave her the will now. She expected to see such rocky frowns as would best be met by, at least, the stare of self-assertion; then she would leave him, and leave this home where she was such a strangeling, with only a face which these people could admire. Leave, at least, this man, and go find the other man, if her two weary feet could trace him to the world's end.

But she met so benign a look, so tender, so deep in its love, a love richer than that same old face had ever yet worn for her. His gray eyes were swimming too. His lips moved without speaking. His bronzed cheeks were softly flushed and eloquent with a transforming welcome. She gazed on him a moment, then flew into his arms, kissing his checks, then hiding her head on his wide shoulder. She was now sobbing convulsively.

"Oh, God! The great, good God. There — there is — a God to hear me, is there not?"

"My darling, yes, yes, indeed there is a God." He held her closely. He could only clear his throat and rub his great hand, the free one, across his eyes, as yet. "I guess — hem! — I guess we have found this little bird — hem! — in, season. I guess so. Heaven help us. We'll save her from the hawks. Yes, we will. There, there!"

He soothed her as if she were an infant, and as if it gave him joy to do it. He seemed to know that all the excitement of not only many hours, but months, indeed, was finding now relief. A woman could not have comforted her with such a bosom. Her mother, surely, never had so comforted her; her own father she had missed so long; her husband — it was as if she had none, in that time of war. How she clung to this manly breast!

"We have run foul of a very different trouble now, daughter," he said. "But this trouble is so easily cured. Yes, yes, so easily. Not like the other, wherein bad men are the cause. This is all between the great Captain above and you. Yes, yes. Softly now. That's the trim of sail to find him. I mean a broken and a contrite heart. He'll meet you more than half way. He is meeting you now; the good God. You are very dear to him. You are praying now. Just tell him all that's in your heart, all you want to ask or know, or need on board; he'll fill you. This is all beautiful to me, I am smiling down on the top of your woman's head, here, as if it were a child's head; smiling, not because I am heartless over your distress, but because I know that such distress leads to infi-

nite repose. I'd tack out o' my course, any day, to see and help a poor soul penitently askin' the way to God. There, there!"

And he stroked her wavy hair with his big forefinger, along the blueish white parting of the locks, while she rested from her anguish, and grew tranquil with a great and ineffable peace.

At last she looked up into his face, beaming on him, and saying:

"I think I can believe, and pray to your God. He is mine! And, oh, sir, how differently has this interview ended from what I feared."

With which she straightened up, and moved away from his embrace.

"Don't forget, then, my child, how we can best defend the boy. All we can do is to pray for him."

"I shall not forget that, to me, the best use of my new found power."

She threw this back to him, as she halted a moment on the threshold. She then sought her room, as fast as her feet could carry her.

The old man sat long on the rail of the veranda, meditating on all that had occurred. After a good deed the world always looks pleasant for a while, and sometimes, for a brief interval,

brightly beautiful. The old captain's world, notwithstanding the cloud of war, for the moment seemed as beautiful as the glorious landscape before him, over which the advancing sunrise was so grandly marching.

His rugged common sense saw, on the one hand, certain serpents to be trodden into the dust; on the other hand, certain doves to be caressed, loved, and protected. His way was plain enough. Probably not a single dark suspicion foreshadowed itself. He rendered, at that moment, his implicit confidence to his son's bride, concerning whom he entertained, but that tender solicitude — oh, exquisite thrill of care — that she should ripen into a full believer in due time.

XI.

TO ENLIST OR NOT TO ENLIST.

BUT those days were like no previous days that we living men and women had ever seen. It was remarked, that summer, that day after day the haymakers greeted the brilliant mornings with firm hope that at last this "ketchin' weather" was over, and the sunlight would continue from its rising to its setting; and great fields were "downed" by the clattering mowers, yet only to be shadowed by mid-afternoon with the black clouds that drenched and spoiled the crop; while scores of lusty toilers turned to idle waiting under shelter, or "tinkerin'" at fussy odds and ends.

There was scarce a farm where the odds and ends were not all done and more, while the noble fields were left undone. Every man's work was greatly changed about; nothing in its right proportions. For instance, such an amount of "goin' to the post-office," usually a mere incident of the rural Saturday night, but now al-

most a daily doing. And such sitting about the steps of the village store, hearing the latest news. Such a quantity of time with pen and ink, and less with the cheese, poor old mother of the boy at the wars, doing better work with your cramped fingers driving the pen, than in the milk-room those fingers ever did, for now they were on the heart strings of a nation. Such a disproportion between the proper reading of the *Herald of Zion*, ancient advocate of orthodoxy in the family, and those all-absorbing city papers full of war, war, war!

Ah, everything out of ratio. Less sleep and more reading and thinking. Less the price of butter and eggs, of calves and colts, oh, bless you, very much less of calculating these things at the first,—though it must be confessed we got back to the notice of such trifles again by-and-by, being human, and having year after year of this, with eggs, *et cetera*, very high for speculation,—but at first the old farm itself, and all that it grew, seemed infinitely small, while we saw great movements of a great age, and our sons the brave actors!

We grew manly and womanly in spite of ourselves. We forgot to gossip about our neighbors, or to quarrel over line fences; forgot the

everlasting battle of the doxies in the great unity of the orthodoxy of the Union. We ceased to throw proof texts at each other, and took the time for prayer. We saw beyond our farm, beyond our "school deestrick," over the horizon beyond our village and state. We saw the blue sea that lies about our land's three coasts; we, who never saw salt water before, saw the whole broad sea-embraced homestead, and began to claim it all. We saw more, too; the faces of the wide world turned towards us as in staring, curious gaze. No wonder things got out of proportion; nay, into true and nobler proportion. The war was a college course to us.

And it was no wonder that Capt. Charles Broon saw things in a different light, a few hours later, when the afternoon papers came up in a cloud to Eaglecroft. That earlier view from the library was not this later view from the veranda. No more were the thoughts of the one hour the thoughts of the later hour.

"Look you, child," exclaimed Captain Charles, his broad face fiery red with the excitement of his reading. "Look you!"

And he first held out to her and then reclaimed paper after paper.

"We have been terribly defeated, child. Why, the rascals are almost in Washington!"

But Laura yet saw things in the old proportion. Her domestic troubles, the piques and prides of social life, the jealousies of lovers, and the theme of the morning. She had come expecting these to receive new attention; and she had expected to hear the ripe conclusion of her father-in-law's deliberations on them. So she stood prettily nonplussed by this explosion about Washington.

He saw it, and resumed heartily:

"Why, Laura, there's only one thing goin' on in the world to-day. That's our war. That little affair — the idea! — of which we were speakin' this morning, that is all right. Everything is all right but this accursed war."

"But, father, if those two men pursue us up here to-day?"

"Child alive!"

He hooked his great right arm as he spoke.

"The man will not come! Why, he'll be off to the wars himself before the week is over. Nobody can resist. Too old? Well, the son is not. He is an American. How can he stay at home? Child, I'm going myself!"

"You! Captain Broon?"

Her blue eyes opened so wide that he laughed

in spite of the passion of patriotism which was on him.

"Yes; I'm going to sound my way along after my boy. My heart! I must see him! Would you like to go with me to Washington?"

She flew into his old arms so swiftly that he almost had one of his recently alarming struggles for breath. She put her soft, hot cheek against his hard, hot cheek. She managed to say it:

"And do you think we could — could see him all alone by himself, papa" — she substituted this title for father since morning — "for just a little? Really?"

"Why, daughter, yes! What a question! But, to be sure, I keep forgetting that you have never had a full day of your husband. Yes, yes, we will. We'll have him up at our hotel of course. But if I were you, I'd never whisper to him any of these troubles. You'll never see the Smiles crew again."

"But are you sure we can really have Mark to ourselves?" she resumed. "He will be in such an ocean of men. Oh, I cannot endure it again, just to see him for a parting! To see him with no time nor place to say what is in my heart; to see him with my heart so full of

himself and myself, but his heart so full of — of the country there. Please forgive me if that's a wicked speech. If I could only follow him, and, finding him, say, 'Come!' and he would step out of that ocean of men and walk away with me where I could tell him what I ought to have told before; and we could sit together and — and —; but to see my husband in the crowded streets or camps, under so many eyes and then, at a sharp command, why, he marches away from me as if — as if I was nobody, and the country was everything! There, again I've said it! No doubt you think me very selfish. May not a bride be selfish of her husband? I tell you, papa, I will not go through that agony again."

"Hush, child," the old man responded, huskily. "I know. He is yours, and yet not yours. So he is mine, and yet not mine. It is the times; God does not so ordain for a bride and her husband, nor for father and son. He should be alongside us now but for man's wrath. But I'll take you to him, I will! I will! Meanwhile think how many other women are left on the love tack, like yourself."

Full of the purpose now beginning to take definite shape, the two went in search of the other members of the household, in order to

make arrangements for breaking up the establishment at Eaglecroft.

Probably they would not return here again during the season. The captain went on to plan it that, after they should have returned from Washington, they would run down to the seashore for a few weeks, and then it would be time to reopen the city house in New York. They would feel a little nearer to Mark, too, he thought, in New York than away up here in the country. Besides, everything up here reminded one so of Mark; this was Mark's place, he seemed everywhere visible. And again the captain added a word or two about some necessary attention to his business, though this almost triflingly.

"What! You will take my child away from me?" almost shrieked poor Mrs. Lane, when, a little later on, the proposition was broached to her. The family and their guests were assembled in the great drawing-room; some standing, some sitting, all excitedly considering the sudden plan of Captain Charles and Laura; and each from a personal standpoint at first, as always with such abrupt change of plans.

"Mamma dear!" and Laura had the little women in her arms instantly, while she kissed the quivering lips in silence for a moment.

"Oh, I shall die if you leave me here, Laura! I am not fit to be alone. That was not in the marriage contract that we should be separated."

The unfortunate lady was, for the moment, utterly beside herself. Her distress was genuine, and moved everybody.

"Mamma, you shall never be left alone!" cried Laura, her fine eyes flashing through her tears, her breast heaving with contending affections. She drew her mother nearer yet, and caressed her as if their kinship were reversed, saying, "No; you shall go with us. Shall she not, Captain Broon?"

"Of course she must! Yes, she b'longs to our mess, now, my girl," roared the captain, wiping his own eyes and stumping about the two, as if half a mind to take his turn at embracing and comforting the hysterical mother. "Wife, here! Go up and get her a cup o' something strengthening. Yes, of course she goes 'long. Wish you would all go 'long. I hate to break up the party, Mrs. Hardy and Miss Madge. All go down to the seashore with us, anyway. My house down there's big enough."

He wanted to add that his purse was ample enough and at the disposal of everybody; but

he had already commissioned his wife to suggest as much to Mrs. Hardy, since the mayor was not at hand.

"Oh, no; we could not think of that, captain," said Mrs. Hardy, now coming to take her place at her sister's side, and offering the cup of cordial which Mrs. Broon, the elder, had brought. "You are exceedingly kind, captain. But we can go over with sister to her farm, for a while, as we had originally intended. And she will bear up and be a brave little woman, I know. For a wife's place is with her husband. I think Laura should accompany you. Madge?"

"Yes, indeed, auntie," exclaimed Madge, taking the hint, and then, too, the romance of uniting the lovers took instant and full possession of the young girl.

She was kneeling at Mrs. Lane's feet. Altogether it was an interesting group; especially now that the old captain had edged his way around to the back of the chairs till he got in his great hand, or two or three fingers of it, gently smoothing the gray hairs of the distressed and perhaps only half-conscious lady.

"The farm, you know, can't quite be left, just now," Mrs. Hardy ventured; and she continued to speak of "the dear old house" and

"how much pride John took in it when he was alive," and "how easy it would be, after a little, to leave it in competent hands while she ran down to Long Branch," etc., etc."

"No, auntie!" It was Laura's alarmed face full as much as her words. "Leave mamma here? exposed to—" but she could hardly bring herself to name the danger so openly.

"Yes; I will go back to the farm!" to every one's surprise Mrs. Lane gasped it out, and with an injured, innocent look and tone. "You children go marry and leave us poor mothers to our lonely way. That's the way of the world!"

"Don't, don't put it that way, mamma, my precious mamma!" fairly sobbed Laura.

"It is nature, sister," said Mrs. Hardy, soothingly, yet a little out of patience again, as she had been much of late years, with her sister's "impulsive and weak ways."

"Cruel, cruel nature, then!" was Mrs. Lane's response, freeing herself coldly from her daughter's arms.

"It is in the Bible, dear lady," expostulated the old captain, unfortunately.

"The Bible!" with a hard glance upward at the speaker. "Yes, I know. In the—in your

Bible." Then she fell to rocking herself back and forth, elbows dropped to knees.

"No, Laura, I will go!" putting away the unhappy bride. "It is all right," meaning the very reverse. "We will pack up this very day, your auntie and Madge and I. You go pack up and follow your husband. It is no matter what becomes of me."

And that was the woman Laura had to deal with, my reader. How everybody pitied the sobbing girl, as she silently wound her arms again about her mother, insisting on the embrace which was not welcomed. How beautiful she was in her wild wretchedness between two contending loves! And no one could help her. So everyone left the room for a time. And everyone heard, with unutterable pity, as the door closed, her heart-breaking moan:

"My husband and my mother!"

"It is all of this dreadful time of war," groaned the captain, as the retiring group halted, all standing, on the veranda without. "God pity us all!"

"Don't you think she had better stay, father?" asked his wife, wiping her eyes.

"Perhaps she had," he responded, wetting his forefinger in his mouth and holding it up to see

which way the wind was, as if the weather had something to do with even this sort of trouble.

"Not at all, Mr. Broon," said Mrs. Hardy, with much decision. "Why, she would be worse than useless here. She has never had her husband for an hour, you might say, to herself. Her heart is gone to the wars. You don't know us women, sir."

"Tut, tut; don't I? I think I do, ma'am. Such a woman as that! Now I know that that little ceremony which took her in tow and bound her alongside o' my son, has changed this ere girl's whole natur'. I know!"

"Strange, is it not?" mused Madge Hardy, curiously, tearing a leaf. "Just that little ceremony."

At which the married people managed to smile, and the group began to break up, leaving the next hour or two to reveal what it would reveal.

As they walked different ways, you might have overheard Madge question her mother, with pretty upturned face, about "young Smiles, who was loitering here in the mountains, if he really was not incapable of any dishonorable purpose, so far as he was concerned."

And Mrs. Hardy's protest that she "did not believe that fear had entered into Laura's remotest thought. It was simply natural, charming bride-devotion on one hand, and love of mother on the other."

Which the reader is welcome to, using it as it may strike you.

As a matter of history, it remains but to record that the house was shut up the next day; that Mrs. Hardy and Madge accompanied Mrs. Lane to the farm; that Laura went off with the captain's family, off to the wars, she and he, though the family were to be dropped at the seaside.

But those days were like no other days we ever saw. Every day was startlingly new. And men changed so with things.

For instance, Erastus Smiles and his father, the doctor. Of course, within a week of the widow's return, the two were become again very familiar visitors at the widow's pretty farm-house.

It was agreed between Mrs. Hardy and Madge that it was best to indulge the sick lady for a day or two. Indeed, they could not have helped themselves, for the widow's stout and perverse will was roused; her resentment yet lashed her. "Was she not mistress in her own house?"

But one beautiful summer Sabbath saw a great change sweep like a flash of light over this little group.

"Well, sister, this is the first and last Sunday riding for pleasure for me!" exclaimed Mrs. Hardy, as she helped Mrs. Lane into the carriage that Dr. Smiles had provided. "I only comply, doctor, for this poor invalid's sake."

"My dear madam," was Smiles' smooth reply, "suppose, then, that you and my son ride together, for he is as sober as a preacher to-day; in a perfect Sabbath mood, I do assure you. Perhaps you can tempt him to confide in you. He's very fond of his mother. If he don't tell you what's clouding him, I shall have to take him home to that excellent lady, whom you resemble, he thinks, by-the-way."

Thumbs pressed together obsequiously now, the doctor having seated himself facing Madge Hardy and Mrs. Lane in the carriage, leaving Mrs. Hardy still standing on the ground.

"If you would be so kind," exclaimed Erastus with genuine invitation. "We really did not know how to arrange it otherwise for five."

And the young fellow's strong, homely face, somehow, had a more interesting and less forbidding look, overcast and grave as it now was, than Mrs. Hardy had before seen in it.

"Indeed I will, Mr. Smiles," she responded promptly. "Of course we shall all keep together."

The party got off in that shape, winding up hills and down dales, to the eastward of Bethlehem; for an hour or two the understanding being that they should return through the village by noon, to secure the Sunday mail, the post-office being open from twelve to one o'clock.

"Yes, Mrs. Hardy," Erastus is saying; "this has been the most momentous week of my life! You have, I venture to presume, guessed that I loved Laura Lane. You have seen that in my talk of this day. You do me too much honor, however, in supposing that I am worthy of a good wife, and in hoping that I may yet find one. I can hardly understand myself in the making of such a confession. A month ago I was proud of my mean, selfish, vengeful self; to-day I confess to you, like a penitent!"

His rugged features were pale as death.

"I will not indulge any embarrassment, Mr. Smiles," the good lady replied, trying in real kindness to disguise her agitation, "for I have a son about your age, who makes me his confident, but—"

"But I ought to realize the indelicacy of

thrusting such confidences on a comparative stranger," he exclaimed. "I do. Forgive me. Yet hear me; for if I could talk to my own mother just now—"

"Why not go seek her?"

"Because," with a quick, instinctive glance over his shoulder, as if to see if his father was within earshot, — "because I must not leave my father here alone. Do you understand why?" with a searching gaze into his companion's benevolent face.

"I — I think I do," she faltered. Am I not here on the same duty?"

Her white hairs enhanced the deep color that now came, till her forehead and temples seemed flaming.

"Yes. Oh, the shame of confessing it," he groaned.

"Then your father really has designs on my sister's property?"

"Hush, oh, hush! I'm not yet ready to break — I do not say so."

"But you, young man, you surely would not be a party to such a scheme?" very vehemently.

"I would, Mrs. Hardy, — just think of it! God forgive me — I would, till a week ago."

"But not now? Oh, sir, not now. Then you are on our side, and the evil will be prevented through your goodness. Heaven indeed bless you!"

Nothing was said in reply, for some moments, till, as they were now in sight of the village church spires, the young man suddenly turned and asked:

"Do you know what has changed me? If indeed it can change me so that I shall be a changed man!"

"God's good Spirit, I trust," she replied, and was too much alarmed by her escort's now almost uncontrollable emotion to ask another question.

"No, Mrs. Hardy; my heart has been stirred with the tempest that has been raging there because I saw that company of patriots march away to heroic war and leave me, a selfish coward, behind!"

"Do you, also, confess to the war fever that has attacked all the foolish boys?" the lady asked, trying to make light of patriotic enthusiasm, as she had often done in letters to her own boy; and yet every playful page had ended in pathetic dissuasion.

"Mrs. Hardy, you have a son?" very gravely.

"Yes," shaking like a leaf now.

"And you do not want him to go to war?"

"What, our Fred? Oh, God forbid!"

The spark had taken to the tinder now. The apprehensions of anxious days and sleepless nights were tyrannizing over her; she could not keep back her tears.

"Well, then, kind lady," Erastus resumed, "you had better leave this duty up here undone, and go put your arms about him, for we young men are being swept like a tempest; your boy will go! Every decent young man of us will go!"

"Stop the carriage! I am faint."

"Father!" shouted the young man, to the other vehicle rolling leisurely behind them across the village green. "Quick! The lady has fainted!"

It was the work of a moment to bring the two carriages together, and to a halt. They were in full view of the people just emerging from the church porch. Dr. Smiles and Madge Hardy were instantly at the wheels.

"Oh, mamma! What is it?"

"Nothing now. I'm re — recovered. Here we are before so many — people. Let's get home." She refused the physician's hand at her wrist.

"We must hasten back, Madge; and I must go down to S—— to-morrow!"

"Mamma, I know. It is Fred!"

"Yes, doctor," said Mrs. Lane, leaning out from her carriage. "It was just so the other night in my room. She's afraid Fred will enlist."

"Erastus," the doctor began, "what have you been saying to this lady?" It was half reproof, half pleasantry.

"I have said, sir," Erastus answered, and at the same time his ashen face was turned towards the knots of villagers crossing the grass, "that all the manly youth of this country would go to war!"

"Severe on yourself, my lad," replied the doctor, trying to laugh aloud, but somehow strangely apprehensive as he searched the blanched features of his son. "Come, let's get out of this."

"Father, look there!"

Every eye followed Erastus Smiles' long, outstretched arm.

"Why, it is a wounded soldier they are clustering about!" Madge Hardy said, clasping her hands.

"Yes," Mrs. Lane added nervously. "My man

told me that farmer Knott's Ike was home from that big battle, on a — a fur-something."

"A furloughed hero, father!" exclaimed Erastus, reverently.

At the same moment he sprung to the greensward, lifting his hat with the hand that was free from the reins.

"Well, you goose," the doctor blurted out, his black eyes blazing, "a blue coat-sleeve tied up. I don't see much to that, except its novelty."

"Oh, *isn't* he interesting!" Madge Hardy panted out. "And an officer, too. See how the people flock about him."

"Yes; was in Boston, you know," the widow began further to explain, "and went from there. My man says he was a machinist, — and the Knotts up here on the back road are very common farmers; but now he's a wounded officer, what fools all Bethlehem are making of themselves over him! And yet he does seem impressive, my dear. A real, live, fighting man up here," musingly studying the picture and, for the moment, amused to the forgetting of her own woes.

"Lost that left arm, I see," said the doctor, gloved thumbs and finger tips tapping each other nervously. "Zounds, but he is a splendid fellow

to be out of hospital so soon! It can't be a month since that first horrid fighting. Satan's work, all! Let us devoutly thank God that none of ours are thus engaged in public butchery!"

"I don't quite like that kind of talk, either," said the widow. For the passing Ike had caught sight of her carriage now, and, away across the emerald pavement, spotted over with the groups in "Sunday dress," he had lifted his soldier's cap to her in a pretty way. "Somehow he does look very fine. Why didn't the hero wear his sword? Let's cheer him. To think of it; he has been in a real battle and got real wounds!"

"Mamma, yes!" cried Madge Hardy, to urge her mother's handkerchief out. She stood, herself, on tip-toe, all pink as a peach with her patriotism, and fluttered her little lace banner high up in the summer breeze. "No, indeed, butchery! Dr. Smiles. I do think it is so real now. How handsome all the men look! Hurrah! hurrah! very softly.

"Child!" exclaimed her mother, "would you encourage your own brother to go off there, and get — get butchered?"

But for all that, dear Yankee soul, she got her banner in the air too.

Then there was a little cheer echoed over

from the people about the hero; a mere Sunday cheer, a clapping of hands of pretty country girls and matrons, with an urchin's piping silver mingled in clapping from side to side of the Green, as others took courage now that some one had initiated the business.

"That's his sister at his side. How proud she seems!" said Mrs. Lane, quite smiling.

"See the man blush," said the doctor, in spite of himself. "Even from here I can see that he's lost the traumatic pallor of a moment ago."

"Retract your naughty word, then," said Madge not withdrawing her eyes.

"What, butchery?"

"Yes. A war for the Union is sacrifice, sir. Glorious sacrifice!"

Then she dropped her arm, and gave him her school-girl eyes, full, all school-girl patriotism.

"I declare I will, Miss Hardy. It is a moving spectacle. Like a picture, this. Like a bit of an epic in a man's own life-time. Because, ladies, you know, we are mere spectators. We can afford to admire, since it is not our son who is robbed of a good working hand there."

All this while Erastus Smiles had been standing by his horse's head, partly hid from his

father, and uncovered under the brilliant mid-day. From his fixed gaze on the passing soldier boy he had not turned a moment. He had not spoken. He had not joined in the soft salute. He seemed to have forgotten his duty to be polite, or care for a lady's safety, for the restive horse, startled by the hand-clapping, began to move away from him unchecked.

"I say, Rat!" his father shouted.

"Father," he suddenly exclaimed, recalled to himself, "please stand by this animal. I want to make the acquaintance of that splendid fellow."

"Why so?"

"Because, father, I am going to give him my name as a recruit!"

"Angels defend me! Am I crazy, or is it you, you simpleton?"

This Smiles, the elder, with a spring to his son's side.

"I'll put you in leading string at—"

"My dear father, you will certainly take your hands off me and—and give me your blessing."

It was a request in love and inflection, but the words and looks were of command.

And what a shock of surprise this first reso-

lute rebellion of his life gave the boy's father, standing there. He took his hands off, however, for he needed his thumbs, which he began rolling so very far backward on his wrists, and with a pressure that showed in his purple face. Then, getting his breath, and bringing himself down from his toes, heavily, on his heels:

"To enlist?"

"To enlist."

"You?"

"I."

"Then that's been the worm at your heart for the last few days."

"Oh, my father, let a kind look come into your face, I do pray you. Send me away with your approval. I cannot do the — the other thing. You will sometime be glad I acted the manly part."

"Why, boy, who asked you to act any other part?" with a quick, warning movement of the black eyes that referred to the rest of the company.

"I know, I know, sir," the son answered, at the same time seizing his father's arm. "But I do not care who hears it. I have no heart for life. It makes not a whit's difference what becomes of me. I'll give my life to my country.

I can afford to do it, surely, if happy men can, for I have nothing to live for. And there, too, I am as selfish as I seem fated to be in everything I do in this world. But yet," and here his eyes caught the approving yet wondering gaze of Madge Hardy, "I dare hope I have just a little manliness in what I do. It is a dear land; many other people may live to be happy in it, if the Union is saved. Now, father — for no protests are of any use, I tell you, — send me away, doing one decent, manly thing, doing a thing that gives the lie to Mark Broon's contempt for me; send me with your blessing!"

"When?"

And there were signs of a shrewd second thought in that elder face.

"At once. I want to pledge myself to that officer in our country's army as soon as he can approach."

Yet there was desperate resolution under his excited grandiloquence.

"See! I have beckoned to him, and all the people are coming."

Which was true. Already one and another of the villagers had paused about the carriages, till quite a little throng of them blocked in the wheels and horses.

"Wait, my son," this in a low tone. "If you will go make a—a hero," with almost a sneer, "of yourself, why, I can do better for you than you can do for yourself. We'll go home and get a commission for you."

"Father," the young fellow resumed, "I always feared you; I confess it. It is your consent I want, not honors."

He whispered it in his son's ear:

"But I want the honors!"

A shade of pity flitted across the younger face. But Erastus replied:

"Very well. I'll not enlist with this man. But I shall give him my hand on the pledge."

He then stepped forward to greet the "wounded hero," now come near, with:

"I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, Lieutenant, yet I want to tell you that I glory in you, and here give you my hand that I have been brought to a decision by the sight of you to go fight for the Union."

"God bless you, stranger," was Ike Knott's response, grasping the outstretched hand. "That's the kind o' talk we want. Hip, hip!"

The villagers gave a hurrah, Sabbath or no Sabbath, while Madge Hardy fluttered up and took hold of his arm; she might have kissed him in her

enthusiasm, but that, notwithstanding its glow, it "was not really, mamma, a truly good face, after all. Do you know what I mean, mamma?"

This an hour or two later, after they had returned to the farm.

For the party rather abruptly disentangled itself from the now decidedly boisterous villagers and drove away.

"No? You are too excited to spend a social evening with us, my poor dear doctor, no doubt," remarked Mrs. Lane, at her own door.

She had beckoned him in, and he had shaken his head.

"Well, I do think the times are terrible. How my heart can sympathize with you, and you with me, now. Laura will admire your son now. I shall write her at once. Ah me!"

And no doubt her sigh was a sign of real distress.

"And yet, my dear lady," the doctor replied, in a tone calculated to command the attention of the other ladies, who halted in the vestibule to listen, "lest we be rude to him, poor gentleman," as Madge had whispered,—"and yet, I say to you all, while my heart is wrung with a natural parental sorrow, I can yet see many

ways in which I shall be the means of doing service to my kind by the free surrender of my only son to this great cause. No doubt a kind Providence will overrule this to my blessing. Good-night, ladies."

"Good-night," from all the others.

"Good-night," from Erastus Smiles in turn, lifting his hat.

"Good-night," again in chorus; and suddenly Madge Hardy advancing and extending her hand to him, the first and only one. He took it, actually, not without a flush, and turned away.

"Why did you do that, you silly child?" was Mrs. Hardy's reproving speech as they were alone.

"Because I pitied the young man, trying to be a hero, and left with such a cold-blooded man as his father."

"A pretty and impulsive girl, Erastus. But what made you blush so warmly?" said the doctor, when they had entered the carriage.

"Because, father, it made me feel young again, and almost as I was a few years ago, when I was cleaner than I am now, to think this innocent young woman so admired a good intention in me!"

"Why, Rat, one would suppose I had debauched my son's mind."

The eyes, full turned and frank, made the only reply.

"Well, now, my son, you need n't take it to heart so thoroughly, that I suggested certain plans in life to you. Drop all that. You shall serve under the precious flag. Why, I got a letter only last night, which I was tempted to burn, in which one of our powerful politicians down home suggested the appointment of my son to a lucrative office in the department of army transportation. It angered me to think of your being enlisted and carrying a sword, as you would have to figuratively, at least, in this wicked war."

"I'll not hear that again, sir, even from you! I can get out and walk. To me it is a holy war!"

He was actually laying down the lines.

"Ye-a-s, holy;" yet his thumbs concluded not to roll each other back very far. "So be it, Rat. Upon the whole this uprising of the people has its majestic side. I'll promise you, here and now, to so view it, if you will agree to take this appointment,—as a colonel, mark you, think of that! in a department of the army where you will not need to kill anybody, nor get killed. Now, come, will you do it?"

Resuming the lines thoughtfully, Erastus Smiles allowed his animal to pace on while the vehicle behind them passed with its driver out of possible earshot. For a season he uttered not a word in reply. At length he muttered to himself:

"Fine pay."

"Yes," eagerly answered the doctor, misinterpreting him.

"No chance of being shot," with a start, and as if it were provoked from him by his father's previous misunderstanding.

"Not a chance, my son!" warmly.

An astonished stare, which meant, "Is it possible you still fail to catch my meaning?" But otherwise silence for some moments, till finally:

"You assure me, on your honor, father Smiles, that you will heartily support the war in all your intercourse with men. You will relieve us, as a family, of any remote suspicion of disloyalty; relieve us and yourself of the danger and disgrace of disloyalty — now listen; do not interrupt me, for I am respectful as I am plain — by thought, word or deed, if I will forego the battlefield and take this safer — God pity me! — safer place?"

"I promise. Heavens! Your patriotism is real enough to move even my admiration."

"Then it is so agreed, and you may reply to the letter at once, for I'm about to return to S—— to-morrow."

Within the next ten days the two men had worked this programme into accomplished facts.

XII.

NOT TO BE CAMP-FOLLOWERS.

"SOMETHING has gone wrong to-day, father?"

It was Capt. Charles Broon's ever watchful wife who said it, following him up stairs to his room to do so, as he returned home from the first day down-town in New York.

"Tell me what it is," she resumed, as he still employed himself, without response, at his toilet for dinner.

She was seated behind him, watching him, with folded arms, a habit of hers, bless her kind heart.

"Well, wife, the fact is," he replied, laying down the clothes brush and gazing curiously about the noble room, "we are anchored here in town for the present. Can't follow up the boy."

"That's not all, father."

She always called him "father." Indeed, she was fifteen years his junior.

"Why, no, shipmate."

Then silence.

"You are always in very grave mood, my dear one, when you call me by that old sea-term. Tell me what troubles you."

And she went up to him, wound her arms over his wide shoulders, and gave him eyes of priceless trust and sympathy. Yet she trembled. He felt the tremors that agitated her. This was not usual, for the life of this home had rarely known a danger or seen an approaching peril in all the munificent years since this "second wife" had lived in it.

He seemed both excited and fatigued. Yet with a great effort he was evidently trying to command himself, in mercy to others. He stroked her hair; he let his arm fall about her in such a strong embrace, as we all have done when dangers, which our arms could not for a moment defend against, were threatening those we loved.

"Is it Mark?"

"Thank God, no!"

"Is it some bad news for the country, a defeat?"

"Thank God, no!"

"Oh, tell me!"

"My business is gone wrong."

"Badly?"

"Yes. I shall lose nearly half my fortune. Not a cent of Southern collections. I warned 'em. I told the boys to trim sail. We supposed we had. But, Heaven help us, my dear, I'll keep the home; I will! Only it seems too bad for an old fellow like me to have to take to the quarter-deck again!"

"What, go to sea?" winding closer to him.

"I don't know but that's what 't will come to. Where is Laura, poor child?"

"Up in Mark's room rearranging the trunks. Indeed poor child, as you say, when we tell her, for she has been as happy as a bird all day at the thought of our getting off to-morrow."

"We will not tell her at present, wife. Cheer up. Let 's go down to dinner. I shall know more in a day or two. After all, it would n't be the worst lot in the world to live in the cabin with me, would it? Hey?" and his stout heart got the mastery for the moment at five and sixty as if he were forty years younger.

Cheer up? As if that loyal lady ever needed such an exhortation. As if any good wife, in good health, ever needed the exhortation at the time, ever memorable in our households, when "business went wrong, and very badly wrong!"

No; it is the man who mouths the exhortation who needs it most.

"You don't take my misfortunes much to heart," said the captain, as they descended to the dining-room, rather disposed for one moment, notwithstanding his own exhortations, to be piqued at his wife's calmness, and misinterpreting it.

"My dear, how can you so misunderstand me?" she asked, ready to show her woman's terror over business reverses in a moment.

"True, shipmate, true, I have myself taught you to trust the compass and chart, and look the storm in the eye. Riches may take to themselves wings, but this is the time to show what our faith in God can do. We've got somewhat comin' to us when we get to port," casting his eyes upward. "At all events, you can drive in the park yet."

"God help us to hide it from Laura, and by pitiable excuses to adjourn the hope she has of meeting her husband," sighed Mrs. Broon. "Shall we ever join husband and wife?"

It was not, however, an easy task, this putting off the day with Laura. She fed on Mark's letters, which came as regularly as the sultry summer mornings. Her mother also wrote her,

and Madge Hardy wrote all the astonishing news from the New England farm. That gave the two caged ladies something to talk about. The heat was something terrific to fight against those long days of waiting; a week of days, before they knew it, two weeks, a month. A month behind the blinds, all the shimmering July mornings and scorching afternoons, with the up-town pavements of those aristocratic streets as deserted as a country road-way. A month of twilight drives through the neighboring park, and back again to a month of distressful sultry nights, in which it was difficult to sleep.

"To-morrow, my dears. I hope we may get away to-morrow."

For a whole month this was the good captain's vesper chant of cheer. Yet every morning took him away from the breakfast table in a great hurry of inexorable business for that day.

One evening, about the month's close, as the captain returned, his wife drew him into the library, and began, very gravely:

"It is telling on her, this country girl. She is not so rosy as she was, cooped in these hot walls."

"I realize it," responded the captain, sadly," yet with the slightest gleam of cheer in his

eyes. It is telling on us all," and the gleam faded, puzzling her. "But, mother, I — I have sold the Long Branch property. There is no place to go to there. I — you must — I have brought up the deed for you to sign."

With prompt cheer of her own she just led him into the library, got pen and ink ready, and offered to search his pockets for the document, since he still hesitated.

"You are good pluck, wife," he said, rubbing his big hand across the veins on his purple forehead. "But, thank God, there's salt money enough left yet for this house of yours; that is, by mortgaging my son's house."

And he heaved a sigh.

Then Laura came in, sweet and sunny, in pretty evening dress. Seeing them busy, she passed on into the adjacent parlors and touched the piano lightly. The two old folks became tranquil in the music, and got on their smiles again. After a while the captain called to her:

"Come in, my child. I say, your husband will be in town to-morrow!"

"Oh, papa, Mark here?"

And she flew at them, color enough now, kissing them both, and then swooping down on a hassock at the old man's side, too eager to ask, but waiting for more news.

"That is, he will be at the store, my dears. I have asked him to get a furlough long enough to come home and sign some important business papers."

"At the store, indeed, father!" exclaimed the elder lady. "But of course we shall have him up here for a week, at least. Think of that, young lady!" with a love tap of her fan on the charming upturned head.

But the charming head had been using its eyes on the old face, and read enough to drop on the knee before the old lips replied:

"Why, no, I fear not, messmates."

Then clearing his throat:

"Fact is, I had great difficulty in getting the colonel — "

"Colonel?" Laura glances up. "He has his promotion then! He was to telegraph me, so his letter said."

"He is coming to tell you himself, dear one," esumed the captain. "What, most ready to cry? Look, mother, at those eyes."

But the eyes were too quick for them both and were hidden again on the paternal knee.

"But, father," Mrs. Broon, the elder, took it up, "that is splendid news in our time of trou ble."

"Hush! Trouble?" with a warning look from the captain.

But that was another straw for Laura, and she braided it quickly, though silently, into the suspicions she had long been at work upon.

"Yes; but a colonel can do as he pleases, I should suppose," resumed the elder wife.

"On the contrary, his promotion runs right across our bows. He has been half-expectin' it for two weeks, or we would have had him home here on a furlough before this. Now that he has his regiment in hand he must be on deck all the while. Everything is gettin' ready to sail, at Washington. Discipline and drill, preparing for the great "On to Richmond" that you read about in the morning papers. Why, it took two governors and three generals, all friends of mine, to get this boy leave of absence long enough to run on here for a day."

There was nothing for it but to fill up the remnant of the fevered evening with consulting railway time-tables, counting the hours, and reducing them to the minutes that Mark could be in town; subtracting the moments necessary for the business transaction; planning the lunch at a down-town hotel, where at least they could all have a little family privacy; and ordering the

carriage for the morning in time to cross and meet Mark on the Jersey side of the ferry. Somehow the whole evening was almost happily spent over such delightful trifles.

Yet Laura took most of the night to add to the arrangements; planning and plotting, even daring to attempt opposition to the authority of the government itself, and keep him a day; planning and plotting, and counting the chimes that struck the hours from a neighboring steeple upon the lifeless air of the brazen night, and only falling asleep for a little towards morning, after she had thought out everything, even to the minutest details of the dressing that should please him most, "which is not easy to decide," she murmured to herself, "for how little I know of my husband's tastes in matters of dress!" However, the womanliness of the thought gave nature sway once more, and with her prayers finally said, she fell asleep.

"I have ordered an extra carriage for mother and me, my dear," was the captain's salutation in the morning, as soon as Laura descended the stairs.

The old man was pacing the parlors, hands behind him, in the old swaggering, quarter-deck walk. And you may as well know it, reader,

he had been pacing there a good part of the night.

"You will take our carriage, with old Ned to drive; you know Ned's safe as — as the Union itself. Go over and meet Mark, and come with him to the office."

So you may picture her, under the old sheds across the North River, that serve the richest of railway corporations for a station, waiting an hour later the rumble of the train. You may picture the rumbling train itself; the final hiss of steam and the halt; the crowd of people drumming the plank walks with eager, hastening heels, and pouring about the few carriages like a gray sea; the weary, anxious people, the excited people who tramped into the metropolis those mornings, not knowing what a day would bring forth; people snatching at the morning papers as they rubbed their eyes open to the early light; people who turned and wiped their perspiring brows, and looked with envy on the few luxurious carriages that would save some fellow a hot walk; and people, too, who stopped to gaze on the erect form, in handsome uniform, guessing at the shoulder-straps, and making all sorts of blunders as to the rank indicated in those days when it was all new to them, of

Mark Broon, who was threading his way promptly through the crowd towards old Ned's white, woolly head and the horses easily recognized.

You may picture the bride of weeks, too, at first face at window, then demurely shrinking back to her corner, laughing eyes easily distinguishing the handsome comer, as he towered mostly above the gray sea, wondering if he guessed who was in the shadowed vehicle, face glowing against the blue silk, lips apart, and ready to speak, fingers toying with the hand-rest, the hands ready to be outstretched.

"Now!"

"Well, well, it is worth worlds to be here, even for a few hours, isn't it, Laura? At any rate, I think so."

"Do not colonels ever take their wives along with them?"

"How should I know, now, sweetheart, what colonels do? I've been a colonel only about two days."

"Which is a kind way of saying no."

"That is, at present, Laura. We expect every day to — to — how do you like it?"

For she was nervously fingering the eagle on his shoulder, and he would talk about that rather than "advances into the enemy's country."

"I think you look like a general. Oh, how becoming it all is! If only there was n't any danger!"

"Well, now," imprisoning her hands, "tell me all about yourself; everything that you have been doing, and let 's leave the wars a thousand miles away, for this day. What splendid letters you write me. I feast on them."

And that made up the ride to the office: things that count for nothing in histories; yet happy the heart whose histories are made up of such beatific nothings. This, however, was said, which is of public importance, just before they reached the store:

"By the way, Laura, to whom do you suppose I have orders to report, here in town? Prepare to be surprised."

"More business, besides your father's? It 's too bad! It 's just wicked!"

"Now, now, you little rebel! But guess whom. No, you cannot. I 'll tell you. I must call on our friend, Col. Erastus Smiles, in charge of transports for troops here. That is, he has the chartering of steamers for government use. What do you think of that?" with a good-natured laugh, notwithstanding.

"Report to him? Is he more of a colonel than you are?" with charming resentment.

"My superior, you mean?" laughing heartily. "Oh, dear, no. It only transpires that, as he is supposed to have vessels in readiness for all uses like mine—"

"What uses can you have for ships, my lord? Are they going to send you to some more inaccessible place than even that Virginia camp over the Potomac?"

"Maybe; I can never tell. It makes no difference, my good wife, where we are sent, so we close this miserable business within the next three months, does it? I may be sent to South Carolina. I would like to take my boys down to that rascally, plucky Charleston."

"Oh, you are a real soldier boy, I see. I can have no effect on you if I try,—which I would not, Mark. No; I'm going to send you off with a cheer; I truly am. Indeed, I think if I did not, you would never come back to me; for your heart is in this war. Now, no doubt, you can find it possible to even think well of Erastus Smiles, since he's a comrade in arms," almost pouting at him.

"I certainly hope so, Laura, though his situation is not the most self-sacrificing in the world. However, someone must perform the duties given to him. But here we are."

"Well, Bob, God bless the boy!" exclaimed the old captain; and he embraced his son. "Come inside. Have n't much time. Thank Heaven I see ye once more. But say a word of salute to mother and come inside, yes, inside."

"Ah, mother," said Mark, cordially, "it is good as a feast to see you," and he kissed her. "Now I'll obey my father like a dutiful son, and go into the private office awhile. Is he very much affected, do you think, mother? That is, has it told on his strength to any perceptible degree, do you think?"

"What told on his strength?" with a look of alarm.

"Do n't you know all about it?" with a surprised pause.

Then glancing at Laura his face fell; but promptly collecting himself he conducted the two ladies into the prettily furnished nook devoted to favored visitors, just back of the row of book-keepers, and saw them seated. He said nothing more; indeed, it was not necessary, for what could one say, unless he said the worst? And this, it was evident, could not be adjourned long. An atmosphere of gloom enveloped the whole establishment. It was visible in the nods

of recognition which everybody gave him and them as they passed; it was an unmistakable pity which softened every sombre countenance.

Mark followed his father through the private doors. What an interminable hour that was which followed!

"I have counted every window in that front opposite. Just sixty windows, mamma," said Laura, demurely, standing and gazing out. "And I can see twenty-three persons, at various desks, through the various windows, all writing. I wonder if the war makes any of them miserable."

Still no answer, and so a quick challenge at last:

"What are you thinking about, mamma?"

"I?" recalled to herself, was the elder lady's reply. "I was thinking that those clerks out there knew more about us, our affairs, I mean, than you and I do. Close the door, my child, and come sit down by me. It is plainly my duty to begin this sad story. It will be easier for you to hear what our husbands have to say when they come out to us."

"I believe I know what you will say," was Laura's instant answer, approaching and standing erect in front of Mrs. Broon. "We are going

to be poor. Well, what of that? I did not marry Mark for his money, you know, mamma Broon."

"We all know that, my dear. But — but you have no idea how much it costs to live here in town, and what changes — "

"I have property," with two small gloves extended, palms open.

"Which you will need to prosecute Dr. Smiles, and defend your mother's home against him."

"Oh, has mamma indeed done that wicked thing at last? and in spite of her last letter's assurances? And you have known it, and kept it from me?" reproachfully.

This further distress swept over the courageous girl like an added gust when a tree has well faced the hardest of the storm. She dropped instantly into a chair, overcome even more by the sense of the long-dreaded social humiliation than by the fear of pecuniary calamities.

"You know the man has become quite a hero up there, of late, by the stand he has taken regarding the war. And his son has gone to the war. Your mother evidently has been glad to welcome him again, and even your uncle found his wife and Madge deceived, it seems, when he arrived there yesterday. At all events,

he has telegraphed my husband that your mother has actually signed papers by which Smiles leases the farm for his preposterous sanitary affair for a term of years."

"Oh, God, help me! help me! I must go to—"

"No, you must go nowhere just yet," said the other lady, tenderly taking the poor, shame-faced girl in her arms.

Indeed, they were both now on their feet, and Laura's face was hidden on her friend's shoulder.

"Now it has been all very abrupt and wrong, perhaps," resumed the elder lady, soothingly, "to tell you this here. But what else could I do? I thought, perhaps, it would be easier for you to hear it just when you could pour it all into your husband's ear."

"My husband!" cried Laura, lifting her face. "It is as if I had no husband. I have never been two hours in his society alone since we were wed."

"Oh, dear child, that is true. It all comes of these weddings in war-time. I don't know as we shall ever see you together."

"I know we never shall belong to each other," said Laura. "I have had a dream of late—"

"Hush, child. Believe in God. Dreams are unreliable," the elder Mrs. Broon exclaimed.

"Captain Broon," the young wife suddenly cried out, looking up as that gentleman opened the door of the inner office, his old face furrowed and fevered. "Papa Broon," she changed it in pathetic entreaty, "you assured me that the great God would hear prayer!"

"Yes, yes, little one, he will."

But the old man was so shaken by sight of her that he halted in his tracks, as in his speech, and the documents in his hands trembled as if a wind was rustling them.

"Let us pass, father," said Mark, almost rudely putting that gentleman aside from the doorway. "Laura?" and in a moment his outstretched arms had almost taken her from his mother.

"No, Mark, no!" with a quick step backward, away from them all. "I have been the means of family disgrace to you."

"You certainly have not," said the mother.

"Dear little craft, no!" the captain's roar.

"My precious wife," cried Mark, "how can any fault attach to you?" and he had her in spite of herself, caressing her tenderly. "You must not, for an instant, indulge such thoughts,

Laura. We need all our courage, all our self-respect, all our fidelity to each other, now. I assure you that we cannot afford to indulge anything like family vanity —"

"Never had it, boy! Never were proud of being rich, Mark, never!" put in the captain.

"I know, father. But perhaps she might be excused if she had attributed to us a trifle of that common failing," resumed the young husband, dropping on a chair, with his wife on his knee. "At all events, Laura, we must go down into the vale of humble things now. We are all poor together."

"Dear Mark," she protested," that is not it at all. It is the thought of your being involved, through me, with — with people of such — such disgraceful superstitions — and — and an unbecoming lawsuit about poor mamma's property, and all your friends saying, 'Did he marry into such a crazy family as that?' And father Broon has such a horror of that kind of people!"

They let her sob it out. After an interval of silent waiting, Mark resumed, addressing his wife in tender tones:

"But, Laura, trust us that we do not for a moment entertain such sentiments. How are you at fault? Unless you suffer your pride to

attribute to us what we will not acknowledge, then you would be at fault, my precious wife. Now take good heart. There, I felt certain that you would. Trust, trust. All our life must be one of trust now. We are all poor together."

"But you would never be happy to return to your dear Eaglecroft with me."

This with downcast eyes.

"I have sold it; or mortgaged it for all it is worth."

The two ladies stared at the two gentlemen. The young man's face was bright and resolute enough, but the old man's face was indescribably sad.

"But — but I shall mortify you just as much here in town," resumed Laura.

"We shall rent the town house to pay small debts," said the old captain, in turn, his face now brightening with resolution.

"Father, is it as bad as that?" asked his wife, very softly, yet with a world of meaning in her suppressed tones.

"I was afraid to say it till Mark came and helped me out," was his response.

"What are we to do?"

This the elder lady, unable altogether to control her distress, and showing a cheek bloodless for the first time in many years.

"I'll tell you what we are to do, good mother," said the colonel, placing Laura in a seat, and providing one for his father, with a kindness not to be disobeyed, and then taking his stand before the group in a cheery way. "Father will take a ship for perhaps a year. His old English friends will be only too glad to put the best ship of the line at his disposal. We shall turn over all our property, according to a plan father has already sketched out."

"Except resin and tar, child. Resin and tar in store. Be exact, boy," said the old man, drumming his feet on the carpet.

"Well, father, of course, to be exact. But the ladies would hardly understand about your speculation in a loft full of resin and a cellar full of tar," laughed Mark. "Nor do I either, quite."

"Yes, tell us," exclaimed Mrs. Charles, who was not a dullard at business, after all.

"Why, you see, wife," said the captain eagerly, "we veer round and mortgage and lighten ship generally, by throwing overboard everything to pay our debts. Then I tell Bob that we have 'nuff o' those two products of Florida, resin and tar, to make a clean new fortune, if we keep it for two years, if the war should last as long.

They are only to be got in Florida, and Florida is closed to all the world. Why, every barrel of tar has increased ten cents' worth since we begun talkin'."

"Well, father," Mark broke in, "that is your experiment. Go ahead. But we can't exactly live on resin and tar meanwhile."

"Sell a little at a time, or borrow money on them," Laura ventured, curiously enough.

"Ah, you Yankee!" shouted Mark, and made her smile and blush in spite of herself. "But we have had to borrow about as much money on the stock now as we can. See? At any rate," taking up her hand and fondling it, "we are to send you two ladies to sea for a few voyages, in the cabin of father's steamer. That will be living in a palace, only it will be afloat. You will not mind hotel life occasionally in port, for a while. And I shall be quite busy with a certain little unpleasantness here in America, meanwhile. Eh?"

Silence all round.

"And now, dear hearts," Mark resumes, straightening up, "we haven't much time for anything but doing the thing in hand. I must go report to this new colonel, who charters transports; and my wife is going with me. Be

sure of that. I'll not let her out of my sight during this day," and he stood waiting her compliance with the word, still keeping up finely, it must be confessed, the semblance of good cheer and playfulness.

Laura had his arm in a moment, with a wifely resolution to be very brave. But she could not repress a sob.

"Poor mamma, with his father, up in the country!"

"Our attorney will attend to all that, love; and I hope, by your second voyage over, that your mother will be here ready to accompany you."

They were about entering the carriage at the office door.

"But, Mark, I cannot, cannot, cannot go away over the ocean, and not see mamma again."

She stood holding the door of the coupé irresolutely, as if to enter might be an embarkation.

"Why, Laura," with just the slightest shade of expostulation, and for the instant almost dropping off his mask of brightness, "what else can you do?"

"I will — will go with you."

"And do you know, child, that I suspect they mean to send me to sea, regiment and all, down South, along the Gulf somewhere?"

"In a ship of that man's providing?"

It came like a brush of lightning along the low horizon in the night.

"What?" said Mark, an exclamation which we use when we know not what else to say, as he handed her in.

The noise of Broadway always compels silence for the first few moments, as you drive into it. Meanwhile the new suspicion of his wife got a little hold upon even Colonel Broon's healthy mind. Then, too, these were days of suspicion. No one could tell who was his friend, who foe, especially in New York, and if one wore a conspicuous uniform at which street urchins were constantly calling attention. The presence of his wife made the young officer decidedly nervous before they had traversed a hundred yards. She, too, noticed the all-sorts of sharp eyes and pointing fingers directed at their windows. She clutched at his arm, and shrunk back. He snatched at the curtain, as, rousing himself, he answered her eyes:

"Laura, that is a ridiculous fear. Smiles is a loyal officer in the Union army, with rank and

interest preventing any, — why, what am I saying? How absurd!"

Conversation in a street roar is half conjecture at best; here a word, then a silence, while you try to guess its meaning, and what your friend is thinking, and then another word.

"Absurd that the Smiles people should seek to destroy you," with a closer winding of the hands about his arm.

"Would be treason. Man would be shot. Send a whole regiment to the bottom? Too horrible. You are all unstrung," patting her cheek, and on second thought himself quite reassured were it not for an occasional glance out of the window on his side, as an ugly truck-driver shook a fist at him.

Fearing that Laura might catch sight of some token of the great city's questionable loyalty, he pulled the other curtain also.

"The hot sun, my dear. A scorching day."

"Can Doctor Smiles be true to anything? Do you suppose safe treason would seem any obstacle to him, if it served his ends?"

"My dear girl, how cold your hands are. You'll be in hysterics yet," trying to laugh, as if that were clear jest. "It is the son, not the old fox, that I have anything to do with.

I'll not indulge this humor in you another moment, darling. Here we are wasting the few precious moments we have together."

"But I was reading only last week, in one of your father's books, about English sailors being sent to sea in rotten ships, simply to get the insurance when the old things foundered. And we talked about it, and your father became so eloquent, and he said it might be just the —"

"Not a bit of it, you poor little heart. Father didn't say that it would be just the trick for traitors. You have supplied that from imagination. Now you know you have."

And he insisted on this interpretation so stoutly, and with such an air of comforting confidence, that he almost chased the unlucky hint of his father's out of her confused mind.

"Now here we are," he went on, "at this young gentleman's office. Not a bit like camps of war, is it? I'll leave you here just a moment, and when I come back I'll tell you that Colonel Smiles has actually done me a favor."

"Don't ask one of him," and she made a motion to follow him.

"Of course, if you prefer to go in with me. I thought it might not be pleasant. Perhaps, then, at sight of you he'll offer a favor without my asking."

"What possible favor?" as they were ascending the steps.

"Who knows, now, if he be the changed man that he ought to be to enlist under the flag, that he will be just chivalric and romantic enough to give me a choice of transports. A week later, for instance," beaming on her.

"Then it is truly, indeed, a question of transporting you away down South, and you have known it all the while!"

He answered only with a curious turning of his handsome face. Could the men tell the women, moment by moment, all that they knew of this business of war, any more than they can, in prosy days, the business of money-making? Time enough for women to know when the thing is done.

"Stop!"

She got the door-knob into her small, strong hand before him.

"Would that mean a week here in New York with me?"

What a challenge was in her wonderful face!

"I was in hopes of surprising you. But, love, it is a mere frail hope, not worth counting on. Perhaps you had better not entertain it, and thus not be disappointed."

"But it would mean that, a week with me, if he offered you a change of vessels; from romance, if you please, seeing the young wife at your side?"

She still held the door.

"Yes; and I had concluded that it would be consistent with my duty to accept. But I'll not ask it, and there's no real likelihood of such a wild dream."

"If he offers it, do not do it. No, much as I crave to have your dear society. Rather wait till forty battles have passed, and your God has kept you through them all, in the hope of our sitting hand in hand for an hour or a day all our own. *Do the very thing contrary to his suggestions!* He has no right to order you."

"Not of himself. He receives orders from his superior officers. Now I must enter, little woman. Take my arm," and he put the arm that now yielded through his own, and passed up into the room.

XIII.

THE TWO COLONELS MEET.

IT was the usual long, narrow "store" of lower Broadway, running through from street to street which the government had hastily leased for its use. Bare, white walls, hung with dingy paintings of the "Collins Line," and various other ancient craft which the former tenant had not thought worth while to remove. Rows of desks and enclosures for many scribbling clerks, over whom the hot gas-lights blazed at noon. The private office might have been in the dim far back, whose dingy windows shed a struggling gray light part way down the room. The front office, a sort of reception room within a railing, illumined by the flashing sun from the east for the last two hours, and hence the drawn blue curtains, on which were blazoned gilt letterings and the United States coat of arms.

Within the enclosure, on the richly carpeted floor, a private desk and chair, and Erastus Smiles, bending to his work with such devotion that

he had not noticed that the meridian sun had left his apartments in the almost blue darkness which the curtains occasioned.

Many were coming and going. The toiling writer paid no heed, but bent still at his honest industry, searching papers, passing and repassing documents as he signed them, now pen between his teeth, now in his nervous fingers. Colonel Smiles wore no uniform whatever, except a military cap. None, except here and there a visitor, wore uniforms. And yet I remember that the door-keeper, who with a look of surprise bustled about to find a chair for a lady caller, Mrs. Broon, was dressed in the regulation light and dark blue of a private soldier, and he had his right arm in a sling. It was he alone who returned Colonel Broon's salute. It was he who took the colonel's card politely, as he saw that the writer at the desk had not noticed his visitors among so many that came and went, and bent over the rail to say:

"Colonel Smiles, Colonel Broon — and a lady."

Pen between teeth, and with a toss of the head upward, Smiles instantly snatched off his cap, and sprung to his feet. Then advancing with unmistakable cordiality under the exterior

of a rather stiffly-worn military salute (fresh volunteer that he was, you can excuse him, and of all men awkward Erastus Smiles), he put out his hand with:

"Colonel Broon! I beg a thousand pardons! We are driven to death here. You are just from the front, too. The glorious front!"

His fine pride prevented his saying that he would himself have preferred the glorious front; but Mark Broon was too generous a man not to read as much in this earnest, homely face.

"Expected you, Colonel. Come right in. A chair," he was continuing, with increasing rather than lessening embarrassment, when suddenly he caught sight of the lady.

"Mrs. Broon?"

"Why, yes, Colonel," Mark replied. "Really the only day we have had together since our wedding, and I suppose I must return to-night."

Erastus Smiles was bowing almost reverently to Laura, yet not offering to approach her. His rugged features worked for an instant under a shadow of pain, which lent them interest, if not attractiveness. The sudden after-glow of manliness that marked his recovery of self-mastery, gave his face almost a handsome look. Then,

too, this officer, with earnest and honest affairs in mind, had changed greatly since they saw him last, not a month ago. Mark was sure he saw it, and Laura might have seen it had she been willing to study for a patient moment the countenance from which her eyes were instantly turned towards the pictured ships on the blank walls.

"I regret," rejoined Smiles, "that I have anything to do with the further separation of bride and groom. No? You will not sit? Very well. I'll be brief then. You were about to report to this office, as I am advised by telegraph from headquarters, to ascertain what steamer, if any, we could at once provide for the transportation of your regiment and three others. By the way, Colonel," with an easy laugh, and recovering something of the confidence of a business man again, "that looks very much as if you might be booked for a star on your shoulder straps in place of that eagle."

"You astonish me, Colonel Smiles. Am I to command the brigade?" and Broon flushed so red with sudden excitement and pleasure that it was perceptible through his bronze.

"Well, comrade, it is a shrewd guess of mine. I only know that there are four regi-

ments to provide for, and you are ordered to report here for their satisfactory accommodation. I am sincerely glad that it fell to my lot to give you the first hint, Broon."

Mark's eyes searched him for an instant. It could not be possible that an enemy would wear a face of such delight in telling a foe that he had undoubtedly become a general. And, moreover, an ambitious, high-minded young fellow might be supposed to see everything with the most charitable and confident eyes the next moment after seeing such a commission in his immediate future.

"Smiles, your hand! I have wronged you in thought. But you need no other apology, I'm sure, than my sincere request to be counted one of your friends hereafter. And I take this occasion to protest to you, Colonel Smiles, that whatever we may feel called upon to do in that ugly matter—"

"In which my strange father is involved with Mrs. Lane. I know. Don't speak of it, Broon. I beg of you spare me," and he actually hung his head.

"I will, indeed, Colonel," was Mark Broon's hearty response. "I believe you are a true man, a genuine comrade in arms. You have won me, I do assure you. And, my dear Laura—"

"Have I won her esteem?" eagerly asked Smiles, bending till his lips whispered it in the husband's ear. "No, Broon, I have not. Who can conquer a woman's aversion, once set and founded on so good reasons? Ah, I played the poltroon! But God knows all. I congratulate you," and the speaker straightened to his full height to say it, "on having such a father to guide you. Instead of which I must move heaven and earth to circumvent mine to save his own honor. But he is my father, remember that," and his one light and one dark eye flashed for a moment.

Then he added:

"If it had not been for my pious mother—"

Then he paused and bit his lip.

Mark half disliked the aspect of the face, but he turned the topic instantly and generously with:

"As regards my wife, sir, why, my faiths are her faiths, God bless her! Yes, my faiths are Laura's faiths; even too much so. She will absolve your past, since I do, and we shall be friends all round, no doubt," and he ventured to pat Smiles' shoulder, to lightly dispense with further discussion of a wife's opinions with another, always disagreeable among gentlemen, and,

as the reader can see, peculiarly so in this case. "Now as regards the steamers."

"Wait, Colonel Broon. I pray Heaven you do not misconstrue my motive."

His lips were again inclined to Broon's ear, and the hearer thought the words were fairly hot.

"I live to conquer that woman's esteem!"

Broon started back. But the other caught him by the shoulder, and pulled him again near, saying:

"I'll do it, if I die to do it!"

The husband was beginning to burn.

"But, Broon, never fear. God witness I never will open my lips to speak to her again. No, no, I beg you, do not misunderstand me. She is your true, noble, loyal wife, and God give you long years after I am dead. But before that time she shall, because she is a true woman, speak a kind and perhaps admiring word of the man whom her disesteem stings almost to madness. No," with uplifted hand, protesting, "don't reply, Broon. Say not another word. Leave it there. Now come in and take a chair while I make my first attempt in the matter right here in hand."

The excited attitudes and movements of the

two young men had not escaped the observation of the lady. As she saw them moving within the enclosure she sprung half up. For her life she could not have stilled her tongue.

"Mark, remember!"

He started perceptibly, and turned to give her a curious glance, but no reply, this young husband of hers. And she blushed like scarlet, wishing, oh, so much, that she had not said it. So she went to the window, and began to study that ever-moving Broadway throng,—as you and I, reader, perhaps, have more than once done in a troubled hour; and it is strange how comforting in its inspired forgetfulness of one's self a window-study of Broadway has often been.

"I heard it, Colonel. I could guess its meaning," remarked Smiles with a downcast countenance. "But do not offer any palliations. No, not a word," with the same deprecating gesture of his hand. "I deserve it all. Only now hear me, and judge if I do not begin to deserve better. I will not have the two steamers ready till ten days from this date. Do you take?"

"Smiles!" exclaimed Broon. "Am I turned seer of future events? I could almost, for the moment, believe in your father's clairvoyance."

"What do you mean, sir?" almost severely. "We were not to refer to those sad affairs, I thought."

"Why, no, my dear fellow," responded Mark, in haste. "Believe me, I did not intend that. But what you have offered is just what, in romantic and sentimental dream, I laughingly suggested to Lau — my wife — you might do. But it was the wildest product of a wish rather than a hope. Are your steamers really ready in this port to-day?"

With an equivocal look that meant to confess the very contrary and save his veracity, Colonel Smiles replied:

"No, sir, not ready, and will not be for ten days. You can get your furlough. And perhaps, my dear sir, a Northern-born boy like you may wish you had strained a point to take it, when you have been down there in the swamps for six months."

"I understand. I expect we shall see the men die like sheep. Not a very heroic soldier's death that, eh?"

"It is agreed between us, then," resumed Smiles. On the eighth day of August I can have the *Iroquois*, the *Storm King*, and the *Portland* ready for your brigade at Jersey City docks, and not a day before."

"But, Colonel, my regiment was to have been ready to come here day after to-morrow. Your dispatches —"

"Never mind my dispatches. I can't get the crafts ready."

"But, Smiles, they are ready."

"Pardon me, you can't prove it."

"True."

"Very well. Now go take a wedding trip, you son of wealth, and that you may have a happy day of it I sincerely wish. Tell her that is the poltroon's first humble service."

Mark Broon might have committed himself but for that last remark. He might have forgotten his high sense of patriotic duty, his delicate regard for transparent truth, and even his wife's warning, but for that unlucky closing phrase. This, however, recalled him to himself in a moment.

"I don't like that kind of talk, Smiles!"

"Very well. Pardon me, and I'll never do my lips the honor to refer to one who is sacredly yours again."

"But, Colonel," insisted Broon, concluding, on second thought, to give it that turn, "excuse me; and yet— really now does this not seem a little like sharp practice with the government, when every moment counts?"

"But it is my doings, and not yours. Leave it to my conscience."

"I decline, Colonel Smiles. Give me my transports."

"You will not let me do you this favor?"

"Under the circumstances I cannot. It would not be proper."

"Proper? You can not mistrust my efforts to please — to please you?"

"It is an evasion of public duty for private reasons. That is, beg pardon, it would seem so to me."

"No doubt. Curses on it, that I have been brought up to be very indifferent as regards such delicate distinctions of honor."

"Is that irony? For if it is I don't deserve it."

With a quick turn, face to face, Smiles demanded:

"What were your motives in going to war?"

With flush, insulted, yet with self-control:

"I do not understand you, sir."

"Oh, of course you do not. I fear we shall never get on as passable friends even. I wanted to go to war and die! Do you hear it? To die! But I got in here. You went to war from love of country. You got in there,

at the front, where you are likely to die. That's the fate of things. But I will be there yet!" with clenched hand on table.

"You must be a most unhappy man!" exclaimed Broon, his better feelings all in command again, instantly.

"Well, now," continued the other, shrewdly following up his advantage, "you'll let me do you, the happy man, a favor?"

After a moment's thought:

"Yes, Colonel Smiles, I will, upon one condition."

"Name it."

"I'll take the three o'clock express," pulling out his watch, "and report in Washington, in person, and to the general in command, that I can be got off in ten days; that private and family reasons make delay desirable for me; and I will ask if the exigencies of the service will allow it."

"Then you will not take the service from me?"

"My dear sir, you are inclined to be sensitive. Your kindness alone suggested and made the plan possible. Now, good-day."

"Very well; as you think best. Good-day," was Smiles' reply.

But, while he rose to his feet to shake hands, he did not emerge from the concealment of his desk.

"Laura," was Mark's salutation, "I have fifteen minutes in which to catch the train. It is only cutting short my stay by two hours any way, my pet. But don't wear such a sad face, now. Come," himself beaming, "and I'll explain all in the carriage."

Which he did. When he had finished (his wife had given way to her tears promptly they were in the vehicle, let us note), there came sobbing out one word of protest:

"Never!"

"What's never to be, love?"

"Never, never a kindness from one of that family!"

"But I have given him my word."

"You should not. There is no obligation that will hold with such men."

Mark Broon was startled. The wild, strange look in his wife's beautiful eyes filled him with alarm. The distress and excitement of the last few hours, succeeding many days of such hours, was doing her, perhaps, more injury than he had feared, even. The wounds that women get in war-time are of this kind. Invisible bullets strike home, and far from the battle-field.

"Mark," she cried in a voice strained and unnatural, "you do not know the powers of evil. I do. You think me superstitious. Alas, I did not have a religious training like yours, though I was beginning to believe in the God you worship, and in prayer. But hear me!"

She clutched him almost fiercely, and her actions were so violent, in contrast with her usual gentleness:

"I believe that the ship you sail in will sink! They mean it shall!"

"Laura, Laura, my own wife! Come, calm yourself, do!"

And he tried to restrain her fearful paroxysms of mental anguish.

But he might as well have argued with the tropic fever in the scorching air. Indeed, he bethought him of the terrible heat as one of the exciting causes of her unnatural state.

"But your hands are like ice!" he exclaimed, thinking aloud.

"No, dear, I—I am not too warm."

Though her teeth beginning to chatter, and her person to shiver as she drew herself closer into his embrace, she confessed:

"That is,"—chatter, chatter,—"my head, at least, is like fire."

"You are ill! We will return," touching the bell, and grasping the speaking tube, through which he called to the driver, "At once and quickly now, my man, to father's store."

Then, with proper self-possession, to Laura, as he gently pressed her head to his breast, fondling her face:

"If you will be a good, brave girl, now, we shall soon be at home."

Starting up: "And you will not leave me?"

"Certainly not; that is, not on this train."

"Nor the next, nor the next, nor the next train! No, not for train after train, and morning after morning! You will not go in the Smiles ship. No; not go like the — wait! My head. But I shall catch it in a moment. I'll sing it:

"'Three fishers went sailing far down in the west.'"

She sung the whole of Kingsley's first stanza through. Then, pausing, she complained of the jolting that broke up her tones. She wondered why they drove so fast, since they were not hurrying now for the train.

"It's all right, dear," Mark reassured her, his voice shaky with his awful apprehensions.

And he spoke again through the tube to the driver, hoarsely urging:

"Faster! Faster! Like the wind, old fellow! Kill the horses, if need be!"

And this he knew she could not hear.

Suddenly the poor girl started back from his embrace, and laughed aloud, as she exclaimed:

"See! We are flying faster than his evil angels! Oh, Mark, there are evil angels. I know it. I have seen them. Dr. Smiles can call them any time. My mamma thinks them good angels, because they wait on that doctor. But, Mark, they cannot be good angels if they wait on him, can they?"

What a horror to him was that beautiful face as it paused for its answer. Those usually tender, deep eyes were fierce in their alarm. The complexion was congested till the rich blood seemed almost visible in its red surge and retreat through the delicate skin. The curling lips showed white. The pretty teeth apart. The luxuriant hair partially undone and falling across the face. It was an aspect of such a frenzy, oncoming or departing, he could not decide which, as, once seen in a countenance we love, has made our hearts stand still.

"My precious Laura," the husband began again.

And to his credit, let it be said, the man controlled himself admirably.

"Come, put your head down again against me."

"Wait," she cried, resisting him, "let me tell you more about the bad angels. No, the good ones this time. Good ones wait on your good papa, and on all good people who have been taught to believe in the good God. But bad ones on others of us. Why, Mark," and she caught hold on the window ledge with one steadying hand, while with the other she gestured into his face, her long handsome forefinger emphasizing her meaningless speech, "Mark, those evil angels can foretell to Dr. Smiles the very steamer that will sink in the sea. But you will not be on board!"

And with that last the cold finger touched his forehead, and her face was in his.

He caught her round about and held her, while he prayed God's mercy on them, and tried for a moment to think with clearness.

"What an interminable street was this West street! Ah, we are now turned into Chambers street. We shall soon be in Broadway. She is yet quiet. Father in Heaven, what does this affliction mean? Oh, what a fool, a dolt, a cruel blunderer I have been! What can I do to undo this? Of course I shall resign; a man's first duty

is to his wife. And such a lovely wife! But is it? What if all the hearts that are breaking, these days, were to bring back the men who alone can mend them,—what, then, of country? Rest will cure her. Yes, I shall beg to stay a week; a month, if need be. I can go and come. My brigade — brigade? What a day of happiness and misery! She shall go to her mother. No; that would only make matters worse, with that accursed rascal up there. Mrs. Lane must come here. If I only owned Eaglecroft — Long Branch? The cottage is gone! All our means gone! Well, well, this is indeed a new sensation. I have no money, think of it! That 's a new sensation. I wonder what poor people do when they are sick. And father goes to sea next week. How quiet she is now. Rest will restore her."

Halt! Loud words outside the curtains and by the horses' heads. They are not at the store!

"What is it?" The wild, glorious face just turned like a half-frightened child to ask.

"A street block, I dare say. Hush, child."

"No, Mark; we are pursued!"

Colonel Broon saw in a moment that an added strain of excitement would be terrible to one in his wife's state of mind. He threw open the door, revealing his head and shoulders, and saw,

instantly, the predicament. He laid Laura off his arm, and by vexation and disgust managed to laugh :

"Arrested for fast driving, my dear. Sit still a half-minute," and he sprung to the pavement.

"Take your hands off those horses, my man," he calmly, yet resolutely, commanded the burly police officer.

"Not much, my fine feller," was the reply. I'll take you in, I guess. 'T ain't no army business as brings a handsome chap like you through the streets at unlawful pace with such a putty picter as that inside."

For there stood Laura at her husband's back, the most marvelous picture of womanly beauty the officer and the street crowd had ever seen. Such a flood of sunlight on that wonderful head! What should Broon do? One thing, at all events; for, on glancing up to the buildings opposite, he saw the coat of arms and letterings of Colonel Smiles' headquarters, and that young gentleman, himself, standing in his own peculiar straddle before the wide windows. One thing surely was to be done. He put his wife again into the carriage, with a kind, strong movement, and closed the door. He yet held the handle as he stood in the street.

"I am on my proper official errands, officer," he began, "and if you do not stand out of my way, why, then, you'll be one of the first whom we must teach in this town to respect the new order of things."

It came natural to the soldier to learn the use of, unfortunately, the ready-drawn revolver. Perhaps it was ill-advised. But the man was desperate; and it was war-times. The crowd gave way, with a rush backward. The really intelligent and well-trained policeman hesitated, though he took the menace cooly, like a veteran, and still held the off animal's bit.

"May be you 're, correct, Captain. Still, — Jim," to an associate on the sidewalk, "run into them army fellers up there and ask who 'll vouch fur this 'un."

"I will vouch for Colonel Broon,— General Broon, I should have said!" shouted Erastus Smiles from his upthrown window. "Take hands off, policeman, unless you want trouble!"

It was all over in a moment. Broon touched his cap to Smiles, thanking Heaven that the curtain was drawn on that side of the carriage, yet, in spite of all things, downright grateful.

Smiles returned the salute, and had his own thoughts as to why these two were back here

again, and driving up Broadway instead of to that train.

Laura threw her arms convulsively about her husband's neck, as they rolled up the thoroughfare. The tremors that shook her warned him not to tempt her to break the now almost unendurable silence.

They are now at the door of his father's store. He tells her as much.

But her eyes are closed. No doubt she has fainted after the chill. But, athlete though he is, the young husband is not quite equal to carrying, bodily, that splendid form. At any rate it would be more seemly to have help.

"What is it, Bob?" somehow it seemed as if his father was waiting and watching, always, for every crisis in his son's life, as now for the carriage.

"Come and see!"

The old sailor, physician and captain, as he had been compelled to be for years on the ancient packet ships, at the first glance said:

"Laura, my child! You — she has not fainted?"

No, she had not; for she sat up and looked them full in the face with those pitiful eyes.

"May God help you, Mark!"

Then the old captain turned to finish his sentence in a whisper to his wife standing just behind him:

"*She is insane!*"

As they bore her in the old man moaned:

"That's what comes of the isms which she was brought up in!"

Mark gave him one look of unspeakable distress; and the tears sprung to the aged eyes as the captain exclaimed:

"Forgive me, Bob. God knows it all."

XIV.

THE ACCURSED SUPERSTITION AGAIN.

"HAVE you heard anything later, papa?" exclaimed pretty Madge Hardy, springing up into the portly ex-mayor's arms.

The train had hardly come to a pause in the station at S—— before Miss Hardy had alighted, and thus assailed her waiting father.

"She is home and quiet, Madge dear. Are they in the car?" responded the perturbed gentleman, rearranging his silk hat and standing collar after the above attack. There is, even yet, something very dignifying in those old-time cheek-shaving, almost ear-lacerating stand-up collars, especially on a ruddy and full-cheeked elderly gentleman without beard.

"Now, Philip," remarked Mrs. Hardy, appearing after her daughter on the platform of the parlor, "now, Philip, you must indulge poor sister," getting down and kissing the ex-mayor. "Is everything all right at the house? Of course you see that the girls air the house every

day, this hot weather. Yes, sister is in there. Terrible about Laura, is n't it? Have they given you what you want to eat? If not, you must blame yourself; you have only to order your own meals. Now, Philip, you must go right on with us. Yes, I see you are all dressed for it. We have no time for lunch, I suppose. Madge ordered it sent in. Do you think Colonel Broon will resign? Is it true that he has been made a brigadier-general, as the telegram said? How sad about their losing all their property! I do hope, Philip, that your business — "

"Well," exclaimed the ex-mayor, "give me a chance, my good wife. You are more voluble than ever. I have half a mind not to go on with you. To think of the audacity of that scoundrel! Did you say he was accompanying Laura 's mother? "

"No, I did n't say it, Philip; but I suppose you may as well know it. He — that is, Dr. Smiles — is in the car," very humbly and apologetically.

"Why, do you know, old Captain Broon has instituted criminal proceedings against the fellow! Indicted for conspiracy! "

Mother and daughter were shocked into silence. Madge Hardy, in particular, gave a little start,

and then catching at one of her father's big forefingers, turned decidedly pale. The mother ventured to say:

"No doubt it is a miserable business all around. But really, Philip, there is one redeeming feature in the man. Or, rather, I should say, we came to regard his son as quite a hero; like Mark, indeed, lately. He's a colonel in—"

"Yes; I know. In a Broadway store at five thousand dollars a year. Oh, you see I know all about this affair."

Yet he did not; for he looked clear over his own daughter's head.

"I know. My old friend, the captain, has kept me informed. I wouldn't so much as think of allowing my family to go another step towards New York with that scamp along o' your sister, except to help the old captain. Why, he has to take ship the very moment Laura is able to be left. I got him back again into our line. You know I'm one of the few American owners."

Mr. Hardy easily lost his breath late years, and his excitement, with his indignation, had been working up to the explosion point for several days, with no one before whom the proud old gentleman could explode on family matters at hand.

"Philip! Philip! Remember where you are!" his wife expostulated. "Everybody is noticing us!"

Which was true. The baggage men and the truckmen, the city merchants about taking train, his brother manufacturers and fellow-capitalists returning from vacations, everybody bowed and opened their eyes on the well-known broadcloth that set so well upon the ex-mayor's familiar, portly form. What aristocracy in the wide world is comparable for sway with the aristocracy of the rural city? And the Hardys were the bright, peculiar flower of high caste in S——. Well, well, we will not quarrel if all aristocrats are as truly noble as Philip Hardy, self-made, and the maker of scores, self-educated, and the educator of hundreds.

"Yes, papa. Come into the car," urged Madge, guiding him along.

And as he had evidently resolved to go, she had no real difficulty in securing his compliance.

"For, papa," she resumed, brightly, at the same time adroitly preventing his passage too far down towards her aunt's compartment at the further end of the car, "papa, you must try to think more kindly of this gentleman. He has been so indulgent and attentive to auntie;

and — and, papa," getting hold on his watch-chain, not difficult to do, by the way, "he protested against accompanying her — "

"Yes, pet, I should think so. He'd better keep away from New York for the present, I should think. Why, we'll have him in jail or on bail before to-morrow night."

"My dear Philip, don't!" whispered Mrs. Hardy. "I cannot, of course, fail to condemn Madge's — "

"Mamma!" exclaimed the young lady, in such genuine distress and confusion that the ever-watchful mother saw instantly that it would be cruel to so much as hint at the warnings here that she had mercilessly expressed in private.

Strange that the old gentleman did not take alarm. But he was so full, generous heart, of other people's dangers and troubles that he did not. Then, too, I do not suppose fathers are very quick to perceive what mothers see very plainly.

The train having started, Mrs. Hardy resumed her attack upon the ex-mayor, gently, yet persistently:

"You must go in and speak to them. The idea! You cannot allow yourself to be outdone in courtesy. And I am sure you will be just

simply surprised," leaning her round person forward, and then settling back into her chair with great impressiveness, as if the thought of it quite overcame the speaker, "at the elegant manners and apparent kindness of this strange physician."

"Humph! Made a captive of you, too?" was all the reply she got for some time.

And yet it was necessary to go into that compartment. Undoubtedly there was no escape. Mrs. Lane, invalid and afflicted, sister to his wife, and mother to his favorite niece, he must go greet her. Nothing can exceed the annoyance that a misbehaving kinsman can inflict upon us. And yet it is best never to break the tie. A true man always owns his own; yes, if he must even follow them into prison to extend the kindred hand. Philip Hardy's wife and daughter knew him too well, either to urge him more, or doubt the issue. They were not unprepared, therefore, when, after ten or fifteen miles by express train, their scrupulous husband and father, stickler for the proprieties in conduct, and careful of his company, got up with:

"Yes, of course. Come; let's all go in and try to cheer up the poor, dear lady."

At the door of the compartment, Philip Hardy was quite beaming, as became a brother-in-law, stooping over and kissing the bolstered lady with :

"Well, Martha, I have good news for you. A telegram of some length was sent me, no doubt the news intended for your ears, when your train should get here."

And he sat down on the cushion at her side, pulling her hand out and fondling it on his own fat knee, but not so much as noticing the physician to whom he had given them no time to introduce him, saying that "dear Laura was better."

"Thank God!" the widow sighed

"Why, yes, Martha," Hardy was quick to reply. "That's good talk. It is God alone whom we are to thank, and depend on, too, in times like these. And—"

He put the conjunctive in to retain his right to the floor, while he made a long pause to impress his previous speech, watching the widow's face, as if he half suspected that her "thank God" was more habit than piety, according to recent stories. His keen brown eyes also traversed the impassive features of the physician, who sat opposite by the window, and the keen brown eyes for once met their match.

"And," Mr. Hardy resumed, "it appears that, after getting her to the house, Laura grew considerably calmer. It is thought to be nothing more serious than nervous prostration. Nervous prostration, my dear sister," now giving way to his generous nature rapidly, "nothing more, I'm sure. Only it is so painful an incident, poor, pretty bride! Such things seem worse in a honeymoon than at any other time, that's all," patting her hand still pressed on his ample knee.

"Honeymoon, Philip?" Mrs. Lane wearily whispered; and grateful tears, let us hope, were in her eyes. "Laura and Mark never had a honeymoon. He has never been in her society a whole hour, that I know of, since the wedding. Is he to resign and attend to her?"

The first vigor that her speech had manifested, throbbed a little in that.

"He is at her side, be assured," replied Mr. Hardy.

"But you have no doubt what his duty is?" exclaimed the invalid, actually leaning forward.

The loyal and puzzled Hardy, hot patriot and kind brother, after all, was about to reply evasively, when he caught sight of the smile that was running round the compartment. Dr. Smiles

had it more fully developed than the others; the patronizing professional smile with which your physician quenches your own wishes and ideas in his counter will; the smile that accompanies a physician's command to the contrary. Hardy read it instantly, and was as much surprised as he was pleased. He had an ally, then, in the strange doctor.

"Papa," Madge made haste to say, "we have been discussing that question of Mark's duty all the way down. She would insist on having our opinions. Papa, let me introduce Dr. Smiles."

It came just right. The ex-mayor actually put out his hand, though guardedly and in silence. The ready doctor took his chance to remark, in subdued, sick-room tones:

"I have been trying to help this good lady's mind into reconciliation with the great and heroic destiny evidently presented by the gods to her son."

The thumbs now came into play, though in gentle pressure, as if only wary as yet.

"The gods" nearly upset things for a moment, it was so far back to Philip Hardy's college days, and so near to the recent scenes of heterodoxy up at the widow's farm. But the black eyes in the corner and the thumbs tri-

umphed. Moment by moment the victory went on. How? It is impossible to explain. It is even harder to explain in rugged Philip Hardy's case than in the hundreds on hundreds of cases that this inexplicable physician had been subduing all the late years of his life.

"Why, my dear sir, I am glad to find a patriot in you," exclaimed Mr. Hardy, decidedly civil in his tone.

"I have a son, sir, as you have," resumed the doctor, not looking at Mrs. Hardy, though she was instantly regarding him. "It is a heart-breaking thing to part with a son on such an errand. We professional men and the good, tender-souled mothers of the boys," now turning his eyes on Mrs. Hardy, "are much alike. We are not trained in the practical school of you business men and officers of civil government," eyes now on the ex-mayor and thumbs pressing harder. "For a moment the war made a traitor of my heart for my boy's sake. But it has passed."

"Ahem, yes," the other gentleman replied in amiable confusion. "Wife and I have been on two sides over our Fred. Oh, he has sailed, my dear," to his wife, "just as I telegraphed you he should."

"Thanks be to God!" said his wife.

"Why, Sally! You didn't suppose I would deceive you, did you? You haven't, now I think of it, dared ask a word after the boy. She," turning to the rest, "telegraphed me such a prayer the other day, that I couldn't, for the life of me, deny her. So I sent Fred to Europe, for the present, on business."

"I cannot blame you."

It was the doctor. It was a home thrust. It completed the struggle for a respectable standing on the just now despised physician's part.

"No more contempt, if you please," thumbs and eyes said it.

"Some one had to go," resumed Mr. Hardy, coloring and looking down. "If it had not been Fred, it would have been I."

"Keep him there!" said Mrs. Hardy.

"Oh, I can't promise as to that," replied her husband, and he was just about to attempt a vindication of his patriotism by launching into a heroic and sincere "permission for Fred to do what he pleased when six months had brought him under the old flag again."

"Do you think the dreadful war will last as long as that, papa?" in pretty trepidation asked Madge.

"I fear it will, daughter," was the grave reply.

What a frequent question on the lips of our women that was! With what affrighted faces they asked it of everybody, and meekly listened to the ever-varying replies. Who could tell? Only God knew. No, not three months. Yes, for years and years. Though not often this last; only the wisest said that. But it was wise, far-seeing Mr. Hardy's blunt reply to every one. He was so often opposed in it that he seemed almost to regard the war's continuance as a defending of his personal judgment and sagacity. You would not say so good a man prided himself on such a dread prophecy. And yet when the shrewd doctor remarked:

"You are right, sir. Many a sad, long year."

"Why, I respect your discernment, sir," came out with a tone very near to real esteem.

A few more words in the same line of shrewd mind-reading on the doctor's part, and a great many more of increasing respect and prophesying on the out-spoken ex-mayor's part, as the train sped on, and it seemed time for Smiles to complete his victory.

It was almost evening now. The western sky over the great uplands of Connecticut was glow-

ing in brilliant hues. The car was flooded with a wistful, tender light; a time for dreams and fancies strange. The heavy foliage by the road-side flung troops of shadows, shifting, flitting, through the windows. The features of the dark-ling landscape were not more changeable than the features of this group of people, as now the glow and now the gloom fell over them. The tardy lamps now snapped into their places, but made the nightfall more impressive. The eyes of all were yet trained out of doors, on flecks of cloud, on evening star, on flashes of bright water here and there in the black earth, that responded to the burnished sky. And all grew pensive in the sight. Who has not felt the wizard power of twilight in a railway car? You are leaving home; you are approaching home; you are weary with the journey and with the broad light of a long day, which has insisted on revealing ten thousand sights which you had no interest to see; and now you are about to be released from seeing, while you may fall to dreaming; the passing vision of many a home's re-union after the bread-winner's day of toil, making you all the more homesick for your own greeting; the grateful cool of dew-touched dust and sod, of fragrant pines and maples; and the all-embracing cool of

wandering winds, those rovers who so love the night.

And to all these people sad and anxious care was whispering; to each a special tale of apprehension for the midnight. To each, except may be the always calm and self-possessed physician, "master of the Fates and Future," as he sometimes told his children. At all events, whether he compelled it or not, he meant to use the silence that held this group in thrall; he was watching it, did not mean that anyone should break it but himself, and hoped, each moment of this silence, that it yet might be a little more prolonged. Finally, as he detected the ex-mayor's purpose, judged by his drawing a long deep breath, to speak, Smiles placed his tapering fingers tip to tip and resumed the conversation where it had been broken.

"Yes, it will be a long, weary strife."

His peculiar tones, which I have often wished I could describe, how they startled everybody! At the same moment he drew the window down with a touch of his elbow, not his hands. Then, over the muffled rumble of the speeding train, he cried:

"I foresee years of blood! I foresee horror on horror piled. It is not given unto all

men to read the future; but it has been given, more than once, to me. For me, poor me, the curtain is lifted, often of late, *and even now!*"

His eyes glowed like fire points in the gloom. His long dark hands were extended, though his wrists were held close up to his chin; his fingers played in the air. Grotesque and ridiculous? Yet I would defy you to have laughed or even smiled, the speaker himself was so sincere.

"I foresee the long line of our sons, there they go, trooping to destruction. That face will never come back again. See? His old father is looking on, as the boy tears off his old mother's hands, and the ranks form. I can see just where the lad will fall and how he will fall. I could point out his future wounds. I could paint his agony, written on his contorted features, as he lies there gasping for water, just under a shrub that resembles our Northern juniper. Oh, oh, so many of them out of the ranks on ranks that I see marching by, could I follow to the fatal end, if my own nerves would only endure the sight! But I must not!" shaking his head. "I will not speak in detail. Do I see your boy there and mine?"

A shriek from Mrs. Hardy seemed to protest against his answering his own question.

"God help us, man! This is dreadful to these women!" Mr. Hardy managed to exclaim; yet his indignation trembled along the tones that expressed it.

"Yes, and to none so dreadful as to me," resumed the man with the fingers. "Yonder city all in flame! Would you know its name? I know it; but I hide it. Those fields covered with the crawling forms of angry worms, on dreadful carnage bent. A battlefield, at this distance, seems like a contest of worms. They come and go, under curtains of smoke, with varying fortune; now this flag, now that. Shall I name the battle and give you the result? It—"

"No!" thundered Mr. Hardy, "Man, are you, too, insane? To no man has the good God given such powers as you claim!"

Yet, though he said it brave enough, even Philip Hardy seemed to have lost the power of a sensible man, to spring to his feet, and either take the wizard by the throat, or these poor ladies by the arm and lead them from the room.

"I can see the ships that sail so proud away and go down in the sea. Why will men embark in that one, now?" pointing with his thumb to some imaginary vessel. "She shall surely sink. I could tell them so. I—"

"Doctor Smiles!" now pleaded Mrs. Hardy, her ashen features stiff with fear.

Madge Hardy sat with folded arms, shrunk into the corner, her lips compressed, her usually sweet face hard as rock.

Mrs. Lane, the widow, alone sat serene and like one intoxicated. She drank in every prophetic word without a sign either of fear or distress. Her hands lay, easy, in her lap. She had not spoken, you observe, for many minutes. There was even a passing gleam of exultation in her eyes, as if her vindication for a "monstrous belief," as the Hardys had often called it, were come at last.

None of them had observed the spotted fire that now began to sparkle out of the windows, the lamps of a city's suburbs; but perhaps the slowing of the train was just the help that sturdy Philip Hardy stood in need of. With a jerk he got upon his feet saying:

"New Haven, thank the living God!"

"Why, papa!" responded Madge.

"I never meant it so much in any prayer-meeting in my life," said her father. "Thank the living God, who yet rules his own world, that we are still in a real world of flesh and blood, with New Haven five and thirty miles

from Hartford! A lunch room and biscuit? Anything material to dispel these delusions in which we have been passing the last, strangest half-hour of my life."

And without a word he took the unresisting arms of wife and daughter, leading them from the compartment.

"It makes one think of the Saviour's words in the presence of the supernatural: 'Children, have ye any meat?'"

It was Mrs. Hardy that said it.

"Don't, my dear; don't couple that sacred name with any such scenes as we have just passed through," groaned the excited husband, as he conducted them to their seats, as far away, fortunately, as possible.

"Can you eat?" asked his wife.

"Ravenously!" was the response of this natural man.

"Well, order it of the porter, papa," whispered Madge, clinging about him. "Do not leave us. We are not hungry."

It was so arranged. And as they began again their journey, flying through the sultry night, they talked.

"It was not so much what he said," — then chicken — "as the actions of" — chicken, — "the

man. I never want to see him again!" gnawing at the chicken-bone.

"But can you explain it, papa?"

"He has simply shown himself a most delightful gentleman, Philip, during our stay at Martha's. He did not call except when she sent for him. He is full of travel, books, a thousand little interesting bits of scientific knowledge, like the lectures of last winter, you remember. Of course, like all scientific men of these times, it is evident that he is an unbeliever. Rather, he has a curious religion of his own. But he never antagonized ours, nor other than respected all our opinions and wishes. At times, to be sure, he was alone with Martha, treating her. But," with a shudder, "we never had any such scenes as this!"

She gave this strong man time to finish his eating. Happy he in whom mental excitement excites hunger. He will last; he will not long lose his balance.

"Of course all such people have their attractive qualities," began Mr. Hardy. "He is a very fine-looking man. He has had a good education. He is engaging because he seems always competent and strong. He has a fund of incidents necessarily, if, as you say, he has travelled

But he is simply an adventurer, when you have said all," slapping his own round knee.

"But, papa," timidly remarked Madge, "you yourself must acknowledge that he strangely impressed even you."

"Yes, for — the — the moment."

"And you have not quite recovered from the spell even yet, Philip," mused Mrs. Hardy. "I can always tell when you are laboring under excitement."

"True, wife," he responded gravely. "And mainly am I troubled to think what is coming when we get to New York. What a study it was! What a comment on the way Lane reared and governed his family! Oh, I used to warn him of the results of no religion, no Sabbath, his skeptical library and free thinking, as he called it."

"Yes," sighed Mrs. Hardy. "You observed how poor dear Laura's peril was forgotten by her own mother, in her contemplation of this prophet."

"Prophet!" Hardy blurted out. "Will he dare attempt to accompany her to bluff old Captain Broon's residence? I only wish he would, though! The truth and a lie would meet for once face to face."

"That is just it, papa," eagerly put in Madge. "He will leave us at the station. He will join his son. He has protested all the way down, at intervals, that he only accompanied auntie on her importunate insistence."

"That is true, Philip. Do you expect to find Mark at the house?" asked Mrs. Hardy.

"Yes; but he will, of course, go back to the army as soon as she is fit to leave."

"Dreadful, is n't it? What will be the solution of the difficulty?"

"Why, next Tuesday Captain Broon will have to take his ship. And I trust the poor girl will be well enough to cross the ocean with him and his wife. It will be the very best thing for such a disease."

XV.

SINK OR FLOAT.

"BETTER, my dear lady! Decidedly calmer! Yes, yes. Thank God! So much so that Mark took passage for camp this noon."

It was hearty old Captain Broon who said it, addressing Mrs. Lane at the car door, under the lights of the Grand Central depot.

"Ah, well," sighed the lady, "take me to my dear child at once. I must rely on you, brother," turning to Mr. Hardy, "and on you, my good friend," turning now to Captain Broon, and then very disconsolately to both, "for the help in walking that my dear doctor has denied me."

Indeed, she stood on the stone platform alone. To their amazement Madge Hardy and her father had seen her come to the car step alone. On the blank features of Mrs. Hardy at her back they looked in vain for an explanation. She had been commissioned to seek that compart-

ment, and escort her sister and Doctor Smiles; but Mrs. Hardy's lips barely stammered it out:

"The — the gentleman is gone!"

"Oh, yes," responded Mrs. Lane, sadly. "He only consented to accompany me after the most strenuous urging. He finally yielded only because he had a patient here. See? With those people. He is going direct to their residence."

"So that ends that," said Mr. Hardy with a broad smile of relief.

A remark which Captain Broon puzzled over for a moment, studying with elevated brows and chin the departing group.

"Oh, ah, yes. Ends it? Came with you?" the captain suddenly broke out, as if a good many things had all at once dawned on him. "I wish I was sure it did end it," he half growled aside to the ex-mayor.

Then the two gentlemen addressed themselves to the task of kindly supporting the widow out to the carriage.

We have not, therefore, to record any scene on the arrival of the party. At Captain Broon's elegant mansion the visitors were received in the conventional manner with cordial hosts the world ever. The meeting between the invalid mother and the ever-beautiful invalid daughter was con-

ventional to that degree that the reader's imagination can easily depict it.

Laura was convalescent, though still confined to her room. It was thought best "not to put the young wife to the strain of another parting from her husband," as the physicians agreed; hence the general, her husband, would not return to see the party sail. Mark had fallen in with the arrangement with costly resolve. He suffered the home circle to use whatever artifice was necessary; he would "be detained in the vicinity of Washington," and indeed that required no acting, for his new duties almost necessitated his presence there.

It required, however, all the magnetic and paternal kindness of the old captain to reason and persuade Laura that it was best for her not to subject herself to the trial of saying a formal farewell.

"For, you poor dear, you will be back again in less than a month, a new woman. The two passages, over and back, will make you blooming as a rose," said the old fellow. "The noble boy kissed you, so sweet sleepin' as you were the other morning, that morning that you begun to get better, and went off like a hero. He's a great soldier now. He leads five thousand men down South."

"Yes, I know, father," she replied, through her tears, it must be confessed. "He writes me this morning that he will sail from this port to somewhere about New Orleans the very week after we sail."

She began to tremble again at that thought.

"But I do hope that he will have nothing to do with vessels furnished by —"

And her arm that lay in Captain Broon's, as they gently paced the long parlors, began to press him so heavily that he conducted her to a seat, saying:

"Exercise enough, child. I don't believe in the doctors much. Not walkin' on land, but walkin on deck 'll do it. The spoondrift 'll make your eyes shine."

"Spoondrift?"

"The flyin' foam from a windy sea, my dear. We call it spoondrift."

"We shall learn all about spoondrift," exclaimed bright Madge Hardy, dashing in and swooping down at her cousin's side. "We shall eat hearty, and give the ship a good name, eh, Captain? And do lots of things. For I am going too! Papa has consented."

"Ye-a-s; of course. Knew he would veer round," laughed the captain, as he left them.

Mrs. Lane yielded to her sister's importunities, and made ready to go up to S—— with the Hardys till Laura and the Broons had finished at least one voyage.

The morning came, bright, beautiful, September morning. The three ladies, Mrs. Charles Broon, Mrs. Mark Broon, and Madge Hardy came down the steps of the mansion, having turned the key in the door. The Hardys had gone back to S——, taking the widow along, the evening before, to spare her the excitement of the bustling scene on the dock.

Old Captain Broon was already on his bridge, scanning his everlasting last things to be done before the *Atlantic* began to turn her wheels.

"A magnificent man in that uniform!" exclaimed Laura, as the carriage drew up at the gangway, and all three of the ladies caught a full view of the dear old fellow, bending over and throwing down a salute to them.

"Yes, indeed," said his wife, in her quiet, kind way, but glowing with pride, it was plain enough to be seen. "But a great deal more magnificent in soul."

"Of course," Madge puts in. "But he looks too grand for anything, does n't he?"

To which they all assented evidently, whatever

such form of words, frequent on the young lady's lips, may mean.

Then there was diving through little doorways, threading narrow passageways, finding the splendid apartments which had been put at the disposal of the captain's party. There were many little surprises of comforts and luxuries, delightful explorations of nooks and corners, and attempts to arrange what needed not to be arranged; all of which occupied Laura and the captain's careful wife. But Madge Hardy said:

"You fix things. I'm going up with Captain Broon."

Yet, truth is, she got no further than the after-deck, where she stood long, using her glass, which she trained out on the shipping that crowded the neighboring piers. She had been thinking all day that it might be, just possibly might be, and, as the carriage turned into West street, she was sure she had seen another uniform. Yes, sure; but not for the world would she have even hinted it to Laura, or betrayed it by any sign. And now, yes, there he is.

Colonel Smiles stood on the house of a steamer fast tied near by. Of course he was only about his duties. Indeed, he seemed to be quite occupied, and only casually to have cast his

eyes up on the departing ocean steamer, always an interesting sight. The waist of the steamer on which he stood was swarming with mechanics, under his observation. Of course, the presence of his father, plainly to be seen also lounging and smoking about ships, was natural, and had nothing to do with the young colonel's information as to the movements of the Hardys.

The young officer wore his dress well. Authority, too, became him. Madge Hardy, herself charmingly revealed on the almost deserted after-deck, exulted, with a little ripple of delight, to think that she was, after all, nearer right about the capabilities of the young man than any one else of her company seemed to have been.

"A woman can read a man, and detect what is in him," she said to herself. "Who dare say he is not manly-looking, for all his poor eyes? He wears a dreadfully grave face, though," studying him through the glass, for they had now exchanged flutter of handkerchief and doffing of cap. "It is his responsibilities, though, I suppose," she added.

He now raised a glass. She thought he turned it on every part of the *Atlantic*, as if in search of someone else.

"Not to be seen, I hope, sir."

Madge spoke it sadly.

And then Captain Broon having sent an escort to conduct her at least to the bridge to see the ship start, she turned away. The great vessel had begun her long journey.

It was not until they were half-way to the Narrows that Laura and Mrs. Broon joined them behind the shelter of the captain's canvas. But by that time it was not possible to distinguish aught except the great Humanity whose dwelling-places lay along these neighboring shores.

From the housetop where Col. Erastus Smiles yet stood and studied the vacant wharf where the *Atlantic* lay so recently, the long black hull of that outward-bound vessel might for a time have been seen. But our young officer never once looked after her. Which of the two young women were in his mind? Both, evidently; with thoughts inclined to linger on the one who had done him the courtesy of a farewell; for, as he dropped his elbow on the corner of a sky-light, he remarked aloud:

"A noble woman! Really, if one had never seen the other, or," a long silence, gazing down through the glass into the dim cabin, then suddenly looking up and finishing the sentence, "if I could do something, or ever had done anything worthy, I should say, of either!"

"I say, Rat!"

It was his father's shout from below.

"Yes, sir. I'll be down directly."

"No, stay there. I'll come up, if I can ever find the — gangway. Is n't it gangway?"

"Companionway, perhaps you mean, sir. But I call it the stairway. Precious little I know about vessels. Right ahead of you to the right, sir," was the colonel's reply, seating himself on a life-raft and awaiting what he suspected was a serious interview.

Whatever Erastus Smiles' opinion of his father might be, however unwelcome this particular conference seemed, now, as ever, the admirable thing about the fellow was that he treated his parent with perfect outward respect. There is always hope for any man who is yet capable of that.

"Do n't know much about vessels, eh?" said the doctor, lounging into an attitude before his son, and offering him a cigar, which the young man declined. "Neither" — puff, puff, at lighting his own fresh cigar, — "neither do I understand much about vessels. But I guess I shall make a good thing out of this one. I bought one-half interest in her for forty thousand; and if you accept her, as of course you will, we

sell her to the government for just one hundred and thirty thousand dollars. How's that?"

"Father!" exclaimed the young man, springing to his feet and straightening up, every inch of him.

If you, reader, who first saw him months ago, in dandy dress, and with an adventurer's cunning face, could have seen him now; if even Laura Lane Broon could, and changed her contempt to admiration; if ex-mayor Hardy could, it would have helped matters decidedly. As for Madge, she had no need to, I suspect.

"Well," sending out smoke wreaths on the sultry, breathless air. "And what has struck you now, my son?"

"Do you mean to tell me, sir," Erastus began, self-possessed and respectful outwardly again, "that you are an interested party in my judgment of these vessels?"

"I told you the truth about a cool twenty-five thousand dollar profit on this *Storm King*," was the reply.

But there was just a shade of the recent and unaccustomed awe of his son in the speaker's features.

"You do n't decide on her, of course. You have inspectors; the best judges of ships that

you can hire, I hope," with a sly wink. "The insurance men took her for us a month ago, though I confess at a heavy premium, — but they took her. There's a way to fix even that. Why, what is the matter with the boy? He is white as marble. Are you sick?"

"No, no," was the reply, waving off the dreadful fingers that began to reach for his wrist, "I am well enough, sir, in body. Would to Heaven I were not! I — father!"

"What?"

"Do you want to hear the plain truth from me?"

"Speak your mind, boy," dropping his black eyes to the deck, and drawing vigorously at his cigar.

"I am not the one to tell it to you, sir, for I am child and you parent. I can, however, tell you what I shall do. First, God helping me, I will live a clean life the short remnant that is left me. Second, I will have nothing whatever to do with my office from this moment but to go there and write my resignation. Third, I pray you, for your children's sakes, for our mother's sake, for your own, sir," his voice throbbed with his heart, "to abandon utterly all that you have entered upon with Mrs. Lane's farm — "

"That is my business. Talk about the steamers, Rat. That is all that concerns you."

Cigar gone, and thumbs now in use.

"Pardon me. It is not all that concerns me. You are now defendant in an unsavory lawsuit urged on by that lady's daughter. We all suffer under the ill repute. But I leave that to you. I have a fourth point of personal explanation, and it is all the more fixed in my mind by your last remark. I shall at once apply to my noble friend,—for he shall be such to me—General Broon, for any post of danger in his command that will give me a chance to die, without actually throwing life away."

"You want to die, eh? It is common with young men in certain experiences of early life."

Disregarding the sneer, with perfect self-command now, the colonel resumed:

"I want to redeem life, if I am to live. If I am to live, sir, life shall be handed back to me, from Death itself, as a new gift. You know I never quite consented to this going to war in a New York office."

"But Broon goes South next week."

"I told you so, father."

"And in this steamer, with others."

"I fear so. It is all we have. These old

hulks," looking round, "as the inspectors call them, are the best we have. Unfortunately, or fortunately, I had accepted the vessels before I knew that you had any interest in one of them. Now, on every account of honor, I am bound to go to sea in one of them."

He waited deferentially for any reply his father might see fit to make.

But Dr. Smiles had no reply. He seated himself on the skylight, and pressed his thumbs together in unbroken silence. When his son asked him if he would accompany him back to the office, there was no reply. When the son suggested that they meet to lunch at the Astor House about noon, there was no reply. When the son begged his father to consider the hot September sun and not expose himself longer on the housetop, there was no reply. Then, reasoning from a long experience, Erastus Smiles turned to go, saying:

"You will at least bid me good-morning, father?"

"Good-morning" was given, and then the thumbs began again to press and roll each other, with all the fingers busily engaged as well.

After a while, in the stillness and the solitude, when an hour had passed, say, Dr. Smiles

raised his head, and his eyes followed every line of the steamer up and down. If there was a rail or shroud, a nook or corner, a mast or spar, a boat or davit that he did not study, it was not his fault. He read the steamer like a horoscope. He stared a hard, searching questioner at the inanimate thing, as if she had a soul, and could answer to his stare. His features worked into that forbidding guise which we have seen them wear, to the widow's terror in the farm-house parlor, to the Hardys' shock and wonder in the railway car. But here he was alone; there was no effect to be wrought on others; it was an effect which he wrought upon himself, wretched man. At all events, he was undoubtedly under some spell. From deck to sky the black glances turned. He was now on his feet. His hands were clasped behind him. His head was thrown violently backward. His hat was fallen to the floor. In relief against the broad new sail of a lazy lighter alongside his professional broadcloth enhancing the effect, he was a maniac, a possible suicide of the next moment; spectators knew not what he was. Workmen, tinning the roof of the neighboring pier-shed, stopped to look at him; but, being New Yorkers who never spoil a possible sensa-

tion, they uttered no protest, waiting to see him plunge. I have conversed with one of these men, and verified my narrative.

But Doctor Smiles did not spring from that housetop. Instead, after a long, agonized study of the hazy September sky, with a groan and a stamp of the delicate boot upon the sounding floor, he cried:

"She will sink! This steamer is one of the fated number! And Rat on her! Who will believe me, if I tell them, warning them, how I know?"

With that, by jerks his head took the natural position on his shoulders; by jerks his back-pulled shoulders came into place; by jerks he drew in a natural breath again. It was all in spasms, like reviving from a fit,—his bringing his hands to the front, his reaching for and snatching up the hat, and finally his walking away. People saw him cross the torrid open West street with springs, and curious boys would soon have followed had he not hailed a cab and disappeared from view.

Could this man read the future? I am not asserting that he could; I am only describing with facts. You are aware that, though no sailor, he was a very capable man in whatsoever direction

he turned his attention. He had had reason to be informed as to the real condition of the vessels in which he had been speculating; their seaworthiness, their age, their value. He had been prowling about this particular steamer half the morning, using his own eyes. But, over and above all that normal method of forming a judgment, it was evident that the strange man had come himself to put faith in these nervous paroxysms of his by the long practice of their effects upon other men.

"Who will believe me if I tell them, warning them, how I know?"

One is rather glad to learn that he ever said that. It is at least one ray of sincerity. He, at least, believed in his own wild, superstitious vision more than in all that his natural eyes had seen. But, then, that is a common experience with practitioners in delusions; they become themselves the most deluded.

Doctor Smiles must have wandered about town, aimlessly, for some time. Doubtless he was debating the various alternatives of his position. Certainly any one of them was distressing enough. If his son resigned, his trade and its big profit might even yet fall through. Then would come possible exposure of his indifference,

to say the least, as regards the safety of patriotic soldiers, which would hurt his professional standing greatly in these patriotic days. May be would come another lawsuit and a criminal prosecution; as yet he had not, to his knowledge, been so arraigned in the Lane matter. If Erastus should really go to war and get himself killed, — well, to tell the truth, this danger terrorized him most; for, after his own fashion, the man was affectionate towards his own, and would, as he had, risk all to make this boy's fortune in the way he judged desirable. But to hazard the utter and final loss of every shred of the son's shaken and already failing affection by confessing that he was not ignorant of the condition of those steamers all the while, and now beg and pray the boy not to go in one of them! how could he do this, unless he coupled with it an humble penitent turning from all his ways? But he had come to half believe in his own necromancy.

It was the twilight of that evening before Doctor Smiles, half frantic and utterly unmanned in spite of himself, burst desperately in at the door of the government office in lower Broadway with:

"My son? Is he at liberty? Card!"

"He is gone these two hours, sir," replied the clerk.

It flashed upon him instantly — and it made the man stagger — whither his son had gone, yet he asked:

"Whither?"

"To Washington," was the careless reply.

Indeed, it was an unimportant fellow who lingered behind, arranging newspaper files and doing odds and ends, before closing.

"Has — has he resigned?"

A dull, surprised stare in reply showed the doctor how foolishly he was acting and talking. He turned and was about to descend to his carriage. He lingered a moment, however, in that distraught state of mind that overwhelms one when the man you must see or be ruined is simply not to be seen. Striving to collect and rearrange his plans, he stepped up to the great window and stood there, looking vacantly out. Suddenly he beckoned with his hand, and said, aloud:

"Come in! Come over!"

Directly the door was pushed nervously open, and a small, gray-haired gentleman entered. The stranger scanned the empty office furtively. Observing the clerk, down the room, he spoke

very low, as he took the doctor's outstretched hand:

"It's a bad business all round, Doc."

"Oh, you lawyers always say so," growled Smiles, in reply. "What now?"

"That old Broon, a perfect sledge-hammer of a man, direct as a blow from the shoulder—"

"Come, Cretley, you and I have talked about Broon before this. What's the latest?"

"Well, he's gone off to sea. His son's in new honors. They have left the entire case to one of the best firms here in town, and—"

"And what, man?"

"I've been looking for you all day. There is a warrant out for your arrest."

This the lawyer whispered in the already burdened ear of a man who had never come so near losing his self-possession before.

"The case?" Smiles demanded.

"Criminal attempt to defraud."

"Will it lie?"

"Oh, but you don't want to have it tried. You, a famous specialist."

"What shall I do? But of course I can get bail easily enough."

"Not to-night. Court hours over."

"A night in prison!"

How fast these whispers flew between the two quick-witted men.

"Or, you take the evening train for Montreal, — on business, of course, to see a great man, or woman, eh?" with a sly chuckle to encourage the client always, "who is a patient of yours up there. You will be back any day. May be expected to-morrow, to confront this foul calumny, etc., all of which I shall arrange for the papers. Now be off. They will hardly be prepared for so abrupt a departure, and you 'll be safe."

At the door of the carriage Smiles turned to say:

"But I can't come back to-morrow, Cretley."

"No, no. Not for a month. Can't you get conveniently sick up there?"

"But," and Smiles drew back to the sidewalk, — "but, I say, Cretley, it takes my breath away. I can't be gone so long. I must see my son."

"Go ahead, man," was the reply, with a push towards the carriage door. "Give me your message to the colonel."

"I cannot give it. Neither can I stay. Oh, ye fates, what may transpire in a month's time?"

As the vehicle rattled up the great thoroughfare the lawyer followed it with glances from under his heavy brows. He seemed half-expectant of the man's return. But, after a while, losing sight of the carriage in the throng, he dismissed such a fear and went on up to his club, which was not bad. The lawyer forgets his client, when out of sight, as the doctor had often forgotten his patient, when out of sight. After all, patient and client must bear each his own troubles.

XVI.

WHAT THE SEA DID TO THE SOLDIER.

"TRAMP, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching,
Cheer up, comrades, we will come."

IT was the sidewalk throng that started the song, as the troops turned from Chambers street into Broadway; though in those early days of the war the volunteer soldiery were themselves often permitted to sing and shout uproariously the soul-stirring choruses which set on fire many a previously lukewarm heart.

But in the streets of the metropolis General Broon had decided that it would be more becoming to quiet even the music of the bands, and with the solemn throb of the drums alone to traverse so much of the city as it was necessary to pass over on their way to the Battery, where the transports were awaiting them.

It was just three weeks after the incidents related in the preceding chapter. Delay is one

of the chief fangs of the serpent War. The bright October sunlight, the cool air and the changing attitudes of the now thoroughly loyal city, conspired always, of late, to fill the thoroughfares with onlookers as often as troops passed. At the cry, "Soldiers!" every clerk would leave his desk, nearly every merchant drop his business, and hasten to doors and windows. It takes an earthquake to wake up New York city, but an earthquake will do it, and when that huge city is once awake her enthusiasm is sublime.

General Broon was riding at the head of his brigade. The heavy, measured mutter of the drums, mingling with the thump of the five thousand feet, made certainly a very modest call upon the attention of any one, so he thought. He was more ready to halt his column at obstructions than were the noisy policemen who preceded him. This young man was rather grave than gay over the thought of appearing at the head of an armed force in a city of merchants, where so recently he had walked about a humble citizen. Then, too, Broon's heart was heavy enough, these days, at best, and of all places here, in this city of his once luxurious and happy home, now empty. Indeed, the light-

hearted and indulged son of idleness had found a "mission" that made him stern, as only conscience can with a stern task in hand.

But as the crowds thickened, and the cheers grew more frequent and more loud, as one and another old companion shouted out his name, Broon's spirits arose. He was glad, too, for the sign it was that the metropolis had begun to love the defenders of the Union. So, when at the corner of that great thoroughfare, the most imposing street, take it all in all, in the world, Broadway, the spectators broke into the then new war song:

"Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching,"

the young brigadier could not resist the impulse; it was not vanity, but patriotic fervor. He gave the order to the bands. The martial strains seemed eager to respond and swell the wild delight. The two regimental bands allowed him were massed for the occasion.

There is something thrilling in it, the dear old music of a brass band. A boy may grow a man, but he never grows insensible to that thrill. The musicians gave the people the very music that they had been roaring and singing, and down the long street, block by block, the

populace responded in turn. It was a good day. It did Mark Broon good. I am glad; for, poor fellow, he needed it. It was the little of the pageant and the pomp of war that was likely to be vouchsafed to him. It was not grand, not prolonged; in a half hour it was all over, and Broon had had his Broadway day, as a few hundred other Americans have had, and will have.

A flush was yet on his handsome face, as he now dismounted, stood on the paddle-box of that old side-wheeler, the *Portland*, and watched the embarkation of his men in three steamers. He stood there long, faithfully supervising all details, when, suddenly, he said to the orderly at his side:

"The —th New Hampshire! That's the last. The regiment goes in this steamer. Now go down and tell Captain Smiles, of Company B, that as soon as his men have broken ranks I want to see him in my cabin. We shall be off now within an hour," and he left his post.

As the little armada, three steamers, passed out over the bar, the lights of Navesink were fighting with the yellow twilight of the October evening. The sea was calm enough, but the eastern oceanward sky was what the sailors call

wet, and the sodden cloud-bands were closely encroaching upon the brilliant blue and gold of the west. However, there was nothing to attract the attention of a lot of landsmen, these volunteers, who, having eaten, were singing and otherwise enjoying themselves within the limits of their brief time before "taps."

General Broon was sitting in his cabin by himself, when, with rap and salute, Captain Smiles entered.

"Good evening, Captain," he said, rising and offering his hand and a chair. "It has n't been my good fortune to meet you since you got your commission, though I knew you had it. You lost something in rank, I 'm sorry to know, by exchanging for active service. But you are satisfied ? "

"Yes; and I take this opportunity to very heartily thank you, General Broon," was Captain Smiles' reply, hearty indeed, though a trifle constrained.

"Do not stand, Captain," resumed Broon. "I am right glad to have your company, and in this room we can afford to let rank go for nothing. We are in for a gloomy night of it, the captain of the steamer tells me. You have got your post of danger in the line."

"Yes," seating himself, and warming into ease under the cordial hospitality shown him, "I told you I was in earnest about this matter. Do you anticipate that we shall see some active service at once? Or, pardon me,—I have no right to ask our destination, even."

"You happen to know, though," said Broon, laughing. "Your late office was in possession of state secrets. By the way, Cap, I tried hard to get you a major's commission. The very first vacancy—"

"I beg you will not think of it, General Broon. I do assure you I—if you will not think me a fool—I want to be with the men."

"And so would I have preferred it," was the frank rejoinder. "I say, Smiles, I owe you, for misjudging you, an—"

"Again I must interrupt you, General. I am not all patriotism, though I confess the war has changed me mightily. But I 'm sick of life."

"May I say that it would be, in my judgment, wicked for you to expose yourself for that reason?"

"Wicked? What is that?"

Mark Broon was not quite prepared for that. After a moment's silence to frame his answer he replied:

"Well, life is the gift of God."

"God? Really, General Broon, you must pardon me; but I'm a frank fellow. I have no idea that God, wherever may be the one which you so denominate, has the slightest interest in me."

"Smiles, see here," exclaimed Mark Broon, rising to his feet, and steadying himself by leaning mostly on the table, but placing, also, one hand on the shoulder-strap of his visitor, "it's getting a trifle rough, isn't it? Smiles, I say, I knew in college the set of fellows you went with were atheistical. I have known something of your peculiar rearing, forgive the reference. But I have an idea that you are too good a fellow to long be satisfied with the gloomy views of things that now enshroud you. Will you let me tell you what I believe, and not think me preaching at you?"

The speaker's manner was so sincere, so delicate his proffer of sympathy and help, the night was so unutterably black in poor Smiles' soul, that for an instant he wavered. Had it been any other man under heaven but Laura Lane's husband! For a moment he made no reply. Then, glancing up:

"One mistake you make, General. I am not

ignorant. My rearing, of which you speak, was by saintly hands on one side."

"And I," responded Broon, quick to understand and to feel, "I have but the faintest recollection of mine."

"Mother?"

"Mother. I hope you found her well. I told your colonel you must have all the furlough you wanted.

"Yes, thank you. I can feel her kisses yet. I say, Broon, she is angelic, my mother. She believes. She is the sheet-anchor of our home. I've not a shadow of doubt that that woman is — is on her knees before her God for us this very moment."

The young fellow's speech was choked in his throat for a little.

"No doubt of it! No doubt of it!" fervently exclaimed Broon. "And my father's prayers and — many others."

That last reference was an unfortunate one, though it came near being worse; that is, if Broon really was desirous of doing Smiles good, and he was. He took at once the resolution that he had not intended to have attempted till the voyage had made them more familiar. Shaking the shoulder on which his hand yet rested, he said:

"By-the-way, Captain, there is a splendid young creature in that distant ship's saloon with my dear wife, who, may be, prays for you. How do you know?"

"Miss Hardy?" was the matter-of-fact reply. "Yes, she is a noble girl. But what interest can she have in me?"

"Well, I don't say that she has any. But let's talk about it now," seating himself. "Before we get to land it may be you'll suffer a kind word on the subject of faith, which, I see, you are not inclined to now. Smiles, a down-right Christian woman, a strong, true-hearted woman, a good wife is what you want. And, if I don't mistake the little signs that I have seen, and if Laura does not write me wrong, Madge Hardy has changed her opinion of you lately."

"Enough, perhaps, to wish that I was a better man. But the idea of her looking kindly on such a desperate life as mine! Why, I'm the embodiment of despair. Link Hope with Despair?"

"She would teach you hope."

Smiles shook his head; and yet a softer aspect spread gradually over his features. He had many times recalled the apparition of beauty that threw him a farewell from the deck of

Captain Broon's departing steamer. He felt certain that no one could have known of that except the gracious lady and himself.

"She would teach you faith also, Captain," resumed Broon, in spite of his resolution drifting again into that theme. "Why, Smiles, I can see that old steamer now, — let's see," pulling out his watch and going through a mental calculation, "she left Queenstown five days ago; it must be after nightfall with them, as with us; the ladies are in the saloon, I imagine. I can see them silent, thoughtful, praying for us."

"They must be very nearly in the track of this easterly storm that is pricking on."

"I had thought of that. God keep them!" was Mark's reply. "I don't believe we are five hundred miles apart," stepping to the window and peering out, "over this same wild sea. Step here, Captain. I declare, it is getting to be what father would call a nasty night."

"I knew it, General. You have been so absorbed in my poor affairs that you haven't noticed how she has been pitching. Don't you think I'd better go out and look after my men?"

"Yes, probably you had. Stay. I'll go out with you. I want to see your colonel."

Together the two officers stumbled out from the narrow little door. Immediately adjacent to the "headquarters" cabin the decks were unencumbered. But within twenty feet Broon and Smiles encountered such obstacles to walking as made their advance very difficult.

Everywhere the prostrate forms of the men. Pillowed upon knapsacks, covered with rubber blankets or stretched on them, and protected by woolens, the troops were coiled up in what scant comfort they could get.

"This rain is terrible upon overheated men who have broiled under their loads in Broadway at noon!" exclaimed the commanding officer. "Where is your company, Smiles?"

"Below, sir. But it is worse down there than here. They are all landsmen and utterly discomforted by the sea. I think you had best spare yourself that, General."

"No, I'll go the rounds with you."

Broon insisted, and they spent an hour or two, together with the other officers, making what arrangements were possible against the annoyances of the rough night.

It was midnight when General Broon got back again to his own cabin. He had placed every available square foot of its space at the

disposal of various officers, some of whom were already asleep, on the floor, in the berths.

Mark Broon sat down, and bracing himself in between table and sofa, began to read his Bible, as was his life-long custom at his night's devotions. He had lingered rather longer than usual over the fond pages, with a sense of comfort in the night's confusion, when a rap at the door announced the captain of the steamer.

"You wished me to report about the weather and the like, General. It is blowing a gale of wind, sir, and, in my judgment, is only just begun. But I think everything is all right. We are 'bout off Barnegat, sir."

"Very good, Captain. Keep me posted. The exact state of affairs, you know. I 'm a sailor 's son, and was born at sea."

"Yes, sir. Know your old father, — grand man General ? "

Broon saw the man 's lips move in whisper. He got on his feet, therefore, and gave the whisperer his ear to hear :

"We can 't stand a heavy blow, Mr. Broon."

"On your life, Captain," was the calm, yet impressive reply, "breathe that to no one ! If necessary, run in to Fortress Monroe in the morning. We can rest under her guns. Good-night. I shall be prowling round."

For a time thereafter Broon sat in silence, except for the heavy breathing of the sleepers about him and the nameless noises of the sea. How grand these noises of the sea, when one sits to listen in a solitary cabin! How terrible the dull thud of blows that have no echo; the hiss and then the treacherous kiss of great waves; the moan and wail of wandering winds that seem to say a thousand things to you, saying, indeed, just what you are thinking, whether hope or fear, with a vast reduplication in their utterance. Unceasingly the ship herself utters little cries and stifled groanings, which you cannot refuse to hear, poor thing, though you resolve again and again not to heed them. Of all the noises of the sea nothing is so pitiable as the ceaseless lament of the vessel in whose arms you ride. You listen, too, for the throb of her machinery, and it becomes like the beating of your own anxious heart You are in breathless suspense at times, lest, having lost its pulse in the deeps, it should never beat again, this iron heart! No, thanks to God, it is yet fluttering. There will be once more a resurrection.

"One is so helpless here, great God!" the young general was saying, though none heard

but the One addressed. "And yet we are always helpless but for thee. And, thou Holy One, grant to me that the delight of the sea, the awful relish of these scenes, a pleasure which is an inheritance, may not soothe me into any carelessness of dangers that threaten these under my charge. Keep ever before me my grave responsibility. My God, to think of it! These thousands of brave, true hearts in these vessels. Preserve us. I trust in thee. We have, we will, do all we can. But thou art our only defender. And now, Lord, my precious wife, whom duty has kept from my heart's embrace since the hour we were wed, keep her, O Lord, as she prays thee to keep me. Stretch thine arms over this fretted little league of waters that intervenes between that ship and this. How precious it is to think that she, they, and I, may be, this very moment, are talking into the one same loving ear. And, Master, Lord, give to this young Captain Smiles a peace and hallowed calm in faith — "

A sharp rap at the door.

"Come in."

An officer, in dripping garments, clutching sword-hilt and overcoat in one hand, while with the other he tried in vain to give a salute, so

tumbled the ship and so snatched the wind at his hat. It was the officer of the guard.

"I report, General, that we have lost the lights of the *Iroquois*."

"And the *Storm King?*"

"She is just off our quarter yet, but the night is very thick, and we often think we have got out of her sight, too."

"Very well, Lieutenant," was Broon's reply. "It is about all each ship can do, I suppose, to take care of itself. Yet tell the sailing master we must slow up, if possible."

"He has done so, sir, and it puts this steamer in great peril," was the response.

"Very well, again. Tell the captain I'll be with him directly," and Broon reached for his overcoat as the door closed.

Stepping on deck, the colonel commanding stood before him, shouting above the roar of the winds:

"The ship's officers have ordered these men below, General."

"Exactly, Colonel. We are top-heavy."

"But, God help us, General Broon, they are packed like sardines down there now."

"Give me your lantern," was the reply. "Now, then, men, follow me down the stairs!"

The soldiers could with difficulty stand, but they began to crawl, roll, creep on all fours, pitch and tumble after Broon. Thanks to his sea legs from boyhood, he managed to stand, hold aloft the lantern, and slowly descend the stairs. The colonel was doing his best to "keep alongside."

"A thousand men in the place that five hundred could scarce breathe decently in!"

"Give us a breath!"

"Hurrah for the Union!"

"Tramp, tramp, tramp, etc."

And shouted names of comrades missed in the confusion, and bitter laughter, and oaths and curses, and hymns and prayers, and groans and yells without a meaning, and a sense of sullen silence mixed with fear; silence mixed with desperation, which was more impressive than the sounds. The useless officers brushed aside; the useful few, by scream and bellow, vainly struggling with this chaos which death alone could hush to order. And death seemed thundering at the door.

"Oh, Smiles, that you? Have been watching you as well as I could any one in this gloom," was Broon's cheery salutation, as the captain of Company B came within reach.

"A troubled scene, General," was the dry response.

The speaker's face was more restful than Broon had ever before seen it; it wore almost a smile of grim humor.

"Something to do is doing you good, my friend. What! hurt your hand? And blood?"

"A fellow caught his bayonet in my sleeve, that's all. What a blunder to let a man go loose in such a mess as this, clinging to his musket!"

"True. It should have been his own captain who got hurt."

Then the howl of winds and other noises of the sea came in to make all conversation impossible. But the general kept Captain Smiles at his side for the long hours of the dreary night. The task was to do what one could to keep order and to endure. Broon had not a half-dozen officers who could hold their heads up, he and Smiles were everywhere.

There is nothing heroic in such duties. It is that other virtue, hardihood, less poetic but more valuable than courage. The duty is to endure, not to do. Many suffer, few endure. Ask me for a predicate to misery. I answer, a stormy night in a dangerous sea. Time often goes

slowly on land, when we are trying to endure. In mid-ocean time comes to a full halt.

Would the morning never come? Why the morning? Because it might possibly reveal the smoke, if no more, of the other two steamers. Their lights have been long invisible.

At length the lazy morning came, breathing in from the east in hazy half-light and gray.

"Can you see her? Either of them?"

Broon stood in the wheel-house with a handful of officers, each of whom had been trying the glasses, searching the mountainous plane for a sight of their two consorts.

No man had the heart to reply.

"What does the man you sent aloft say?" to the steamer's captain.

Only a shake of the head in reply.

What a vision of cloud-land! The heavens and earth had no steadfast line of separation for one moment. The next moment the sky rose up from the sea, parting with a roar; the sky opened into great rents and altitudes of silver-gray, through which seams the torrents fell afresh like a deluge. After the torrents, then vast fields of mist, translucent, almost sun-touched from above, then instantly opaque and seemingly as hard as bluffs of blue stone.

Army on army of mists! Charge on charge of the stinging, blinding ranks! The eye could not help following these chasers of clouds; twining wreaths of vapor that were swung like the skipping-ropes of children, through which the lumbering billows gambolled.

The poor side-wheeler, flat-bottomed for river use, rolled till the sea gushed from her paddle-boxes and clogged her woefully. She stood on end, strangely, in spite of all efforts at ballasting.

"My God! There's a wreck!"

Broon snatched the speaker's glass. After a moment's deliberate study he replied, his face white enough, but his tone calm:

"Yes; the *Storm King's* survivors. Captain, we must near ship — I suppose you dare not slow down, — and send out for them. That's probably all there are, — not over a dozen men. Oh, God, what a tribute to the sea she made last night!"

"I want to go, General. Remember!"

It was Captain Smiles.

"I haven't the heart to order a sailor," said the master of the ship.

"Go, old stroke-oar!" fairly yelled Broon, as he grasped Smiles' hand. "You can find some

other college men down below there, who 'll gladly volunteer."

And he did find members of certain university crews who volunteered, though it was so rough a job to launch a boat that the steamer's captain drew revolver to compel his deck hands to do so much as that.

"Gentlemen, that 's well done! And that! God help them! If mortal men can do it, those men will!"

General Broon was watching the brave boat, and his hands worked on the window-ledge as if he were tugging at the oar. What a pitiful sight it is, a small boat upon the great curve of an ocean billow, toiling upward, shot downward, on glistening crest, in caverns of green, seen, lost, found, and gone again.

"Mate," Broon cried, "tell the man at the masthead to hold aloft his hand as long as he can see them. It 's no use his shouting to us. Up hand!"

And a boy was sent up the ratlins to convey the word.

"Heaven forbid these mists," Broon muttered to the man at the wheel. "Every now and then that fellow at the masthead is half invisible."

"Yes, General. It was a risky thing sending

off a boatload in such thick weather as this is liable to be at any moment."

Such was the mate's opinion.

"But, man," was Broon's answer, "Smiles volunteered. And we could — can, see? — we, too, can see the wreck."

"Yes, sir, by glimpses. But it's likely to shut down like a curtain to your bunk any minute. Pardon me."

And the sailor took a fresh quid for his cheek and tugged away at the booming whistle.

The mournful notes of that whistle, at sea, where there is no echo, and the tone falls dead-like on the air, yet ever groaning, sighing, groaning, like the protest of a living creature in the face of the overmastering elements.

"God forgive me, if I did wrong!" fairly groaned Mark Broon.

Was it all mist that wet his manly cheeks? Surely not all mist of the sea in his fine eyes.

"But, I say, gentlemen," addressing the other officers about him, "if you or I were clinging to yonder wreck, we would be glad to have a few brave fellows try to reach us?"

"Certainly, General, certainly," replied all the military officers.

Silence all the ship's officers.

"What do you say, Captain?" insisting on some sort of reply from the master, who had just tumbled through the door.

"That we must," ringing the engineer's bell sharply, "steam on, or go down ourselves, sir. Put her head round!"

The eager helmsman let go that wheel instantly. How it flew!

General Broon gave one sharp, challenging glance at sound of the orders which abandoned that boat-load of rescuers to their fate. Iron-nerved as he was, he yet staggered for an instant, and sky, ship, sea began to grow invisible Anger and remorse smote him. He felt like a murderer. With a spring like a tiger, he grasped the master by the throat, and shouted:

"I'll put you in irons! I said luff up for those perishing wretches?"

The grizzled sailor said not a word, but accustomed to authority, smote his fists and wrists together, ready for the handcuffs. Then suddenly he turned his face to the sea. Every one understood the gesture of the stiff old neck; every eye obeyed the motion.

And there, across the changeful wilderness, a transformation! The waves were bowing down.

A mile away the sea seemed level as a plain. The wreck was plainly visible, resting in momentary peace. The long boat was visible, but the rowers sat powerless. Broon, at least, knew what it was. The wind!

Behind the dim, far wreck, a bank of blackness, a besom of power, a sweeping destruction. It reached to the darkening of the noon zenith light already. Already long streamers, ropes, and rags of this black mist swept through the upper sky. A shroud shut out the man at the masthead, and when they saw him again, for an instant, his long-sustained right hand, signal of hope, had dropped, and he was descending unordered.

The mighty roar that now broke on them would have made his words inaudible. But Mark Broon wrung the hand of the old skipper, with infinite apology, and threw himself back on the seat to await the shock that was to strike them.

It is impossible to write about the next six hours. Indeed, it is generally impossible for the victims of such hours to realize, much less narrate them. A merciful lethargy deadens all consciousness, in most people. They do not know, they do not wish to know, what is hap-

pening. All the day that followed was indescribable. Yet Broon, sailor-born, and the ship's officers knew all, felt all, struggled and planned all.

The night was again shutting down, when Mark Broon, with little hope, yet worn out — for three nights now he had been sleepless, — sought his cabin to throw himself down for an hour. I ask the reader to believe it. I am not accumulating horrors. The regimented surgeon was there awaiting him, and saying:

"General Broon, *we have cholera on board!*"

The two men stared at each other in silence. But nothing is so calm as despair. Broon has often said since that, after a moment, this new terror seemed to add not a feather's weight to his load. He simply felt curious to ask:

"Are you sure?"

"Have been sure since noon."

"Can you quarantine them?"

"No."

Broon has since told me that the professional coolness of the physician in the presence of this Death was the same as on the land; the surgeon, utterly fatigued, lighted a cigar. But when, a few moments later, the steamer's captain staggered in with, "General, we have bent

a piston rod — must shut off!" the surgeon sprang up and yelled:

"What then?"

"Then, sir," Broon replied, bracing his chair, "we must drift till help comes, or perish!"

And while he dropped his own head in prayer, the surgeon, frantic, snatched a life-preserver and fled, afraid of this Death.

"Every man to his calling," Broon remarked, and, clinging hard to his chair, he resumed his silent call on the God of the sea.

Did the God of the sea hear?

XVII.

AND WHAT THE GOD OF THE SEA.

DID the God of the sea hear?

I tell you a plain tale of the answer to prayer, every fact of which I can verify. Read it, believing. God does answer prayer. But his ways are not our ways.

"Fannin' along, fannin' along, my dears," was Captain Charles Broon's salutation to Madge Hardy and Laura Broon, as they emerged, arm in arm, from the companion-way of the *Atlantic* to greet him. He was walking the deck, which was yet encumbered with coils of hose, and wet with the early morning flushing. "Up to greet the clear weather, are ye?" and he bent both arms of his pea-jacket to take theirs. "Got rubbers?"

He himself wore jack-boots, and looked almost as rough as the elements he had been combatting for the last three days and nights.

"Did n't expect company so early, and am not dressed, you see."

They both kissed the old salt for good-morning, and Laura answered, as she tucked herself up to him:

"I should think the fanning was over. Oh, isn't it a beautiful morning?"

"And what brilliant sunlight and sky, except off there towards dear America," added Madge Hardy.

"Yes, my dears. That's the storm that has blown by us. Rough along the Yankee coast yet," said the captain.

"How far are we from Sandy Hook?" asked Laura.

"We'll see Fire Island Light afore daybreak to-morrow. And what a handsome, hearty woman I'm takin' back to her mother," turning affectionate eyes on her. "Feel's well's ever in your life, don't you, my dear girl?"

"Yes, indeed," with a little skip and a step as elastic as fair youth ever knew.

Then suddenly the young wife slowed her tread, and Mark's father saw and understood the shade that came over her bright features.

"I know, I know," remarked the captain. "I've been thinkin' all the morning, too; ye-a-s."

"It isn't quite as joyous a return home as we could wish," added Madge Hardy, with a

meaning that Laura understood, but the old gentleman never dreamed it to be other than sympathy with her friend.

They walked and talked till the bells struck the breakfast hour. They had the deck mostly to themselves, and spoke lovingly and long of Mark Broon, but never a word of Erastus Smiles. The young ladies tried the mention of that name once in Captain's Broon's presence, after these two pure hearts had shared each other's secret, and Laura had been very generous for her cousin's sake. But the captain had exclaimed:

"Smiles? Smiles? Ye-a-s. A bad lot that. I never want to ship any of 'em when I once get through with the father."

It was never attempted again.

"Where do you say he is now?" said Laura to her father.

"We've each been tryin' to locate Mark, mother," he replied, as they were seated at the table.

"In dear old Washington, I hope," was the elder lady's reply.

"In New York," guessed Madge, with a pretty flash of hope in her glance at the mention of the city, which both the other ladies knew how

to interpret in connection with the nameless man stationed there.

He at least was in New York.

After they had all guessed around, except the captain, they insisted on having his conjecture. They had hardly noticed his reluctance, but now it was manifest in many an attempt to change the subject. They noticed, too, his increasing reticence and abstraction, and wondered at it, for the storm was over, and his iron face should have softened now its hard wrinkles of many hours. When at length they were bound to have his reply, he turned on them, and got up to go, as he answered:

"I fear at sea."

It took the ladies some time to shake this off, fanning along, fanning along. The three ladies went on deck, and mingled with the promenaders. They saw the captain on the bridge, walking, ever walking, but he kept, singularly, out of everybody's way, and everybody remarked it. After a while the elder Mrs. Broon got into her chair, and began to crochet, but the two young ladies had yet too much excitement of expectation to walk off, and they continued the old, old round. Did you ever take that round, reader, turning at the capstan, or some other way-mark, time after time?

Mrs. Charles Broon's sea-chair was located by the capstan, and as the two girls turned and turned about, she overheard fragments of their conversation. The topic was already familiar, however, in many little motherly confidences which Madge had sought.

"I do try, Madge, for your sake, to think better of—" and the turn was made.

"Yes, it is so sweet in you; and all from love of me, dear Laura. But—" and the girls being turned again, the winds whisked the rest of the sentence off to sea.

"No, I'll not say I love him, yet," said Madge.

"Oh, I hope not, yet, child. But you do want us to give him a standing, and invite—"

The turn was made.

"Yes, Madge Hardy. God help me to admire a noble character, however much I may have —"

"— wish myself he were a real fighting hero, and Mark told you the man himself—"

The turn again.

"Don't say shed blood, you naughty girl. It breaks my own—"

And again the turning promenaders strode away.

"Poor girl! Poor, precious, glorious girl!" sighed the worker with the crochet, as she turned it down under her hands, and began to think too intently for plying the threads. "What a strange thing is a woman's heart! What will it all come to? What will the ex-mayor say? Love him, indeed! Of course she does. She is thinking and whispering of him, in her modest way, all the while. And praying for you, too, young man, if you only knew it. How long she lingered on her knees, last night, at her silent prayers. A sweet, good girl. She ought to wed a hero, like our Mark."

Then she observed that the girls had seated themselves with a company watching "shuffle board," down the deck, and glancing up, she saw her husband beckoning to her from the bridge. She went towards him, and the old sailor met her at the foot of the ladder, saying, gravely."

"Wife, I can't get the thought out of mind that I must put this ship on the other tack."

She gave him a surprised smile, and answered:

"Well, Charles, I — that is — if you want to tack — "

"My dear, you never heard of such a crazy

thing as my puttin' to you such a remark, now, did ye? No, nor I either. Look at me. Do I seem ill?"

"Ill?"

"Yes; pale-like or unnerved?"

"Why, papa, is anything the matter?" she asked, all alarm.

"No, no. Nothin's the matter. Only for five or six hours, now, every few minutes, that vagrant thought has been a-hauntin' your old man: 'Put the ship on the other tack! Put the ship on the other tack!'"

And he brought his arm round with that emphatic hook movement all his own.

"Well, Charles, do it, then," she replied, at a loss what else to say.

"Do it, woman? You can't understand what it means to put the ship on the other tack. Why, it would just send us straight back, as it were, towards Liverpool."

"Oh!"

"Yes; and here we are a-fannin' along straight on to the Hook, fust rate. What a crazy idea to possess a man!"

And he cast his eyes round on the sparkling sea with a look of genuine distress of mind.

"You are tired out, Charles. Can't you come

down and sleep a while? Three such days as we have had!"

"I've thought of that; but I'm not tired. I eat, I feel perfectly strong and well," swinging the circling arm. "But say nothin', say nothin', wife. I wouldn't have a mortal know the old man was indulgin' such weaknesses. It's a mere wanderin' thought, a mere vagary of the mind," and thrusting his hands into his pockets, he went back up the stairs to his place on the bridge.

Of course there was no need of his being there. It was, moreover, the hour that he generally devoted to social intercourse with the passengers, gallant and jocose as the lightest-hearted among them, in fair weather. People remarked his absence, and would have called to him where he was, but that there was something in his sad, stern face that just now forbade all banter.

"Fool, did I say? Did I call myself a fool?"

He was apostrophizing the white caps, as he leaned against the rail at the end of his walk.

"Who knows that I'm a fool? Never submitted to superstitions such as sailors often cherish. Not I, a sound Methodist, and a steward of the church at that!"

Then he resumed the old round again, studying the ship and seeking, evidently, to interest himself in his vessel.

"Fine run to-day, Mr. Ketchum," exclaimed he, squaring off to the second officer, who was superfluously present, and wondering "why the old man kept the bridge so long this splendid weather."

"I put her down for seventeen knots, sir," was Mr. Ketchum's audible reply.

"Hardly, hardly; say sixteen, sixteen, Mr. Ketchum."

"I am sure it will exceed that, sir," the officer rejoined, ready to enter upon argument, deferentially, to pass the time.

But the captain had himself already cut short the conversation he had begun, and had resumed his climbing, up hill and down dale, of that ever-changing promenade.

"Something troubles the old man," mused Ketchum. "Not like him to be abrupt, or seem to lack politeness."

And the officer preserved his silence thereafter, keeping his watch that had no authority so long as the master was there.

"The — other — tack!" Captain Broon was muttering it over and over. "The — other — tack. Put her on it."

No one could hear him; he stood, solitary, apart, and said it to the sea.

"Superstitions? No. But it may be that a kind Providence is tryin' to save me from some evil. Now I believe in Providence," shaking his head and smiting the rail with his hand. "It just may be, now, that I'm too near in shore for the night. Haven't had an observation for some time. Shall get one to-day, though. I'll have it soon now. But the water looks right color," leaning out and dreamily studying the sea.

His attention was now all absorbed in watching the gray and darkling clouds, not stormy, but indolent and opaque and persistent, which followed after the storm of the last three days, the reaction from the sky's laughter in the first clearing off.

"Shall hardly get it, Mr. Pike," addressing the navigator, who now stood ready to cheat nature at the slightest chance, as noon approached.

"I think we will, sir," was the reply. "But really, you know, Captain, we shall not die if we don't."

For the man could not understand Captain Broon's anxiety. Indeed, he was disposed, almost,

to explain it on the score of "the old man's being so long ashore that he 's nervous about the coast;" and there had been a smile or two exchanged between the officers at the foot of the ladder, at the captain's expense. But who dare be seen to hold the ship-master in light esteem, no matter what follies he exhibits?

"Die, my friend?" was Captain Broon's quick response. "May be not. But I want you to get the sun, sir, if it is a possible thing."

"Of course, sir," was the very deferential reply.

But after long and careful watching the approximate hour of noon slipped by and more. The aftermath of cloud had not yielded. Noon bells had struck, and the decks had emptied for lunch.

"You'll have to prick it out again, I see," was Captain Broon's comment to the navigator; and he went to his room for a while.

The run was posted, and the passengers gathered as usual to settle foolish bets and congratulate each other on being so much nearer home. But Captain Broon was not with them, jolly and agreeable, to receive his usual share of the congratulations.

The great event of a sea day came and passed

but the old captain was not in his usual place at the head of the table. Yet no man ever loved a good dinner better than he.

"In his room," was the frequent wifely explanation.

"Mother dear, is he now really ill?" asked Laura.

"No, no, child. Broken of his rest so much of late—"

"Asleep, I hope," said Madge Hardy.

Yet she somehow,—and, strangely, she used afterwards to relate,—felt a sympathy of unrest with this old sea hero. Even as she expressed the hope that he was asleep, she was certain that he was broad awake and troubled.

The afternoon bells struck off the hours, and the usual lazy loitering on deck went on this day as on all fair days at sea.

Captain Broon came up at the stroke of the hour, and marched moodily, avoiding all, to his old beat on the bridge. Let his own words tell the story of his mental state at this hour of that eventful afternoon:

"Turn which way I would, I saw that order, 'Put the ship on the other tack.' It was writ out on the foam which streaks the billows like ropes after high winds are gone. It took shape

in the scuds that had been hastenin' after on the grayish sky. The wavy line where sky and water met spelled out the same, sir, 'Put the ship on the other tack.'

"If I looked up sudden to the sail, —we were carryin' a few close-reefed to steady, — I could ha' sworn I saw the big black letters there upon the canvas, and only when I stared point-blank it vanished. Bein' out'rd bound, we burned dirt coal, of course, and the long smoke, waverin', beckoned on that other tack. I even thought I saw it on the colors, 'Put the ship on the other tack.' 'Tis a wonder I did not go mad, sir. Indeed, I thought I was.

"I went below, and pricked my course all out for myself, thinkin' a kind God might be warnin' me o' danger on the shallow shores off Long Island, say. No; we were seventy mile from land.

I knew how unhappy I was makin' wife and the girls, dear hearts. They often looked up at me, or came alongside and offered to hail me. But I couldn't ha' talked with 'em to save my life. And after a while I saw 'em go below, as the sun went down. How glad I was to be rid o' their kind eyes. I was n't particularly thinkin' of my son. But I might ha' known they

were thinkin' of him, and prayin', too. You see, my wife was just a bit of a sailor, and knew that gale o' wind had gone ahead of us. And," here he would always pause in his narrative, and lay his great forefinger impressively upon your shoulder, "I had upset the peace o' these dear women, without thinkin', by my remark at breakfast about my boy's bein' on the sea."

The writer has heard him tell:

"As the night fell over the great ship, and the decks became deserted, I dropped into the wake o' the restless passenger you 'll always find on a vessel's deck after dark, walkin' solitary, and I kept up a round behind him. My distress of mind kept prickin' on and prickin' on, harder and harder. The sky? You never see the sky ashore. At night and in mid-Atlantic is the time and place to see the heavens. And 'specially if you have anything on your heart that makes you lift it to the unseen God, as it were, for help. Why, that night, the clouds bein' all gone, the stars seemed to be holdin' me in derision for my disobedience. The next moment them same sparks of fire seemed to threaten me. Then, when I prayed, all the heavens-full kind o' melted into gentle looks, and their eyes softened, as eyes do when tears just begin to fill 'em.

"'Put the ship on the other tack.'

"Well, my friend, I begun to be afraid under the sky there. I 'm not goin' to deny it. Afraid of God, my boy. A man need n't hesitate to confess that. He seemed to be lookin' at me.

"And the voices of the sea! They are many and noble to whomsoever will hear. I always enjoyed 'em, and many a time have closed a book I was readin', quietly, to listen to 'em. But now all the sea's noises said just this one thing," and he would swing that right arm, scythe-like, nod his great head to the right shoulder, impressing the dread refrain:

"Put the ship on the other tack."

"I can imagine, Captain, that the winds said it," I once remarked.

"Well, no. There was no wind after the dog-watch. But there is when you hear the sighs of the riggin', as she whips over the crest. And the machinery of a steamer is continually lamentin' and croakin'. And an iron ship, my lad, is everlastingly bemoanin' herself; ye-a-s, specially in an easy night, when she ought to be happy. All these noises said it. Why, the ship seemed actually unwillin' to go on!"

"It must have been about ten o'clock, — though I was by that time in such absolute

agony that, to this day, I have never been able to speak very positively of my actions about then, — that I just stopped stock-still, anchored! I was on the bridge, I 'm sure. I called to the officer in charge, a Mr. Lapham, and said:

"'Lapham, put her on the other tack, and let her stand on till midnight. D 'ye hear? Then come an' wake me. I 'm goin' to sleep.'

"You should ha' seen the man stare at me. I knew he thought I was crazy. But, of course, he 'd ha' said nothin' if I had commanded him to stop engines or scuttle ship, you know."

"They never question the master?" I asked.

"Never. Then, like a whipped dog, I turned and went staggerin' down to my cabin, and threw myself out on the bed, the most relieved man you ever saw. And yet my steamer was tackin' like a brig."

Captain Broon has often told us that no sooner had he stretched himself out than he was asleep. The whole ship's company slept, except a few nervous people, perhaps, whom the rattling of cordage and the sudden change of motion, an unusual thing with a steamer, sufficed to awaken. The night went on. The ship went on, on her backward tack.

Suddenly Captain Broon awoke. He sat up

and gazed around his room. It was still lamp-light. He reached for his watch that hung on a nail near his head, and looked at the time.

It was two o'clock of the morning!

With a bound the old man sprung to his feet, and touched the signal for the officer of the deck, and angrily waited his coming.

"Did I not tell you to call me at midnight?" he demanded, not even addressing the officer by name.

"You did, sir," was the reply.

"Well, then —why,— here it is two o'clock."

"I came in at twelve, sir; spoke to you. You apparently awoke. You sat straight up in your berth, and looked me full in the face, asking the time."

"What!"

"Yes, sir. I supposed you were awake, for you then added, 'Let her stand on for two hours more,' which I have done."

Without a word of further reply the old man passed the officer, and ran on deck. The officer followed his superior in wondering silence.

"Put this ship on her course again!" roared Captain Broon.

The orders flew from man to man. The sails began to obey. The wheelmen struggled with

the high-running seas. The great ship obeyed, slowly, laboriously, and wonderingly it almost seemed, as she turned her prow once more towards the west and the home port.

"I remember," Captain Broon used to relate, "how calm my mind at once was. All the tempest of many days was over. I only felt indignantly impatient with myself for having lost so much time, and eager to get on our course instantly. I was standin' on the bridge as she wore round. I remember just how she put her nose up on that fust big wave, and took a look, as it were, off towards the moon just a-top the horizon in the west. I was about to turn on my heel and go below, when there, in the sheen of the moon-beams across the tumbled sea, I beheld the broken shape of a pitiful wreck. Had I been a quarter of a mile on either side of the straight line from the moon, I'd ha' missed her sure! For you can't see a wreck, hull down, in the night, no lights a burnin'. But this one was black, like spiders' webs, across the yellow of the settin' morning moon.

"It thrilled me like a shock, my dear sir. God had made me sleep over. God had navigated that ship. God meant to use me to save those lives.

"Quick as thought I resolved what I would do. I bore straight down on the wreck. It was n't more than a minute, it seems to me, before every soul on board the *Atlantic* knew what we had run foul of, and was on deck to see the strange sight.

"My wife and the two girls I put in the doorway of a house I had on deck, right where they could see me every minute. How wild and excited those women looked in the light of the lamps! But strange, sir, they were all on their knees.

"We kept bearin' down on the wretches, of course, and what a silence there was, 'cept as I bawled to the men what I wanted 'em to do when we reached her. I never saw waves run higher. My fust mate vowed we could never send a boat alongside, nor transfer passengers if a boat had 'em. But I knew we would. I just watched my time. Then I luffed up and slowed down, keepin' her head on, not more than two hundred yards away. And there she was. God help me! I can hear the shouts of the wretches wailin' through the darkness, even now.

"What an age it seemed to take to get that fust boat-load back. And when she came I just told two big fellows to stand by; then we

passed a line fore and aft of the boat. When the little thing fell off, she seemed more than forty feet down. Then, when she rose, we just took 'em aboard, like you 'd toss babies, one by one, and the two big sailors caught 'em.

"Not a word was spoken on board my ship, 'cept by myself. An awe and a 'Thank God,' was over us all. The first man we took wore a uniform. In the dim light not many of our people noticed what the rags of the poor fellow were, but I noticed. Then I knew, just as well as if I had been told by an angel, that those were my son's poor people. God help me! I could hardly stand. It was not till the boat had gone back that a single rescued man was fit to answer a question, and name the wreck.

"The mate came up to me, and began to announce:

"'It is a regiment —'

"'Stop your noise!' I bawled, and cast a glance round down to the ladies.

"But I saw that they had not heard, though there they were, those three dear faces, pale as death, and watchin' for the next boat-load.

"Just then I heard a man sing out:

"'A cast-away on the port bow.'

"I s'posed it was some one from the wreck

who had thrown himself into the sea. We got a line over, and a man went down to the wreckage, on which it was said the man was floatin', and poundin' his brains out against us. I was watchin' for 'em to draw up, when — will ye believe it? — that girl, Madge Hardy, actually flew down, over stairs, cordage, and lumber, and pressed her way through the men like lightnin'," with a sweep of the arm to describe it, "and there she stood when they brought up — whom do ye think?"

"Erastus Smiles!" we generally shouted, all in chorus.

"None other," always with a pleased toss of his gray-whiskered chin and the hook motion, delighted to think we had guessed right. "And the man was stiff as the dead, all swollen under the cords with which he'd lashed himself to a stave of a ship's long-boat.

"And the sweet young girl —"

"Never uttered a cry, but followed as they took him to the cabin, and said how he could not be dead, oh, no, she knew he could not be, for that very night she had felt that God would answer her prayer."

"The other ladies?"

"Well, then, ye may be sure I had my hands

full. My son's wife was not quite so calm. Of course she knew all, then. She and my wife, I had 'em up on the bridge with me, in two lashed chairs, faint like, as boat-load after boat-load came in. 'Is he there?' 'Have they found Mark yet?' was what they were sayin'? But I did not expect my son till the last, of course. I knew he would do his duty, if he was alive, and see everybody else off first."

"You asked, of course, if General Broon was on the wreck, alive and well?"

"No, sir. I didn't dare ask that."

"Why so?"

"Because they were all such a weather-beaten and half-starved lot that I was afraid Mark had perished, knowin' how he would have exposed himself most. To have been told that he was dead, afore I must know it, would have jest taken me below. My only son! Thank God!"

"That is, he came in the last boat."

"Exactly. And like a man, too; though he was all tatters, and starved for two days and nights. Yet he stepped down from the rail, where the two big sailors had him, man-fashion, and took my hand. I was right there to meet him. He simply said:

"'I believe, father, it is in answer to prayer.'

"I tell ye, that was a royal hand-shake. I can feel it yet! But he had to leave me at once an' try to support Laura. And they were both like two babies, and my fust mate and I almost carried 'em both into my cabin."

It ought to be told, for the honor of human nature. It shall be added. After the last poor castaway was safely on board the *Atlantic*, the quartermaster of the regiment elbowed his way through the throngs of grateful passengers who surrounded Captain Broon and, paper in hand, began:

"Captain, the contract, you know."

"What contract?" growled the old man.

"Why, say fifteen thousand dollars, your personal share; and your men, say—"

"What! A contract for savin' lives on the broad Atlantic ocean? Never!"

"But the government always—"

"To the dogs with government! You can give my sailors what you please. But I don't propose to receive any pay, except from the great God who, once in my life, sent me a direct command!"

And though merchants and passengers gave him many and costly testimonials, no salvage money would this old hero ever receive.

XVIII.

UNARMED.

"WITHOUT doubt, for a month at least, Laura, dear," Mark was whispering to his wife, the next day, as in the broad sunlight the steamer was forging up New York bay.

She drew the closer to him for this assurance, saying:

"A month, at least, with my own husband!"

In fact, reader, it was to be nearer six months. The government at once left the whole charge of gathering up the scattered fragments of the ill-starred expedition in General Broon's hands. His station was to be in New York for half that time.

"What do you suppose they will do?" asked Laura, indicating, with a nod of the head, Captain Smiles and Madge Hardy, who were nervously pacing the steady deck at a distance.

"I know what she ought to do," was Mark's reply. "Give her whole heart to that hero, for hero he is, and worthy of her."

"Yes, indeed. Your father goes into ecstasies over the story that everybody is telling about Mr. Smiles' bravery in that boat."

"Everybody on the ship honors Smiles, except, it may be, —"

She put her pretty fingers to his mouth, and stopped him with:

"I, too, have learned to honor a man ennobled by a heroic purpose in life."

"Laura," exclaimed Mark, fervently, "yonder man would give the world to hear you say that."

She was on her feet in a moment, and sending out a silver call, "Captain Smiles!" in the direction of her beckoning hand, as that officer and Madge Hardy made their next turn on the deck.

The two invited parties approached at once; the man pale, the woman warmly blushing.

Laura flew up on Madge's side, and then extending a hand across to Erastus Smiles, began, bravely:

"Captain Smiles, I have hardly exchanged the greetings with you which such a hero, such a true and noble man as you have shown yourself to be, deserves."

Then Madge fell to embracing and kissing

the speaker in such an impulsive way that both Smiles and Broon could think of nothing better to do than to shake hands.

"I say, Captain," Mark began, "your cup of happiness must be about full. You may as well confess that this lovely girl, here, has given you a hope to live for. Engaged already, aren't you?"

But Smiles was so nearly overcome with emotion by young Mrs. Lane's speech that he could only stammer out:

"Not quite as far as that, General. But you must release my hand. I must give it again to your noble wife, whose faith in me," as he seized her hand again, and gazed earnestly into her kind eyes, "is worth almost as much as the love of a forgiving God."

"Eh, Captain?" was Broon's quick response. "A forgiving and loving God? You believe, then?"

"General, a man taught as I was in childhood, on my mother's part, don't spend forty-eight hours on a raft in mid-ocean without prayer. And he does not come to rescue, as I did; does not hear it from the lips of a beautiful woman, as I have from Miss Hardy's, that she, too, was praying for him, without believing

that the great God hears the prayers of the good."

"Thank God I hear that speech!" fervently replied Broon. "Old Mayor Hardy could n't object to that sentiment in a proposed son-in-law."

"Papa, —" Madge began.

"Suffer me to say it, Miss Hardy," Smiles interrupted. "I realize, General, the social obstacles that are in my way. We have, to be frank with you, been speaking about them. Might I dare so much as to ask your good offices with this lady's parents, when we get ashore, on my poor behalf?"

"Smiles," said Broon, "one single word from my father to Hardy, if he talks about you to him as he is talking about you to this ship's company, will leave nothing to be desired."

"Thank you; thank him!" replied Smiles, "of course you and I are in for the war; and a long time will yet ensue in which I may prove to Mr. Hardy, for myself, that I am not altogether unworthy."

"Captain, I'll have you with me for the present, any way," rejoined Broon.

"If I consulted myself only I might well be glad to hear that, sir," said Smiles; "for there are other and more vexatious matters connected with the — with my unhappy —"

"Now, Smiles," said Broon, interrupting, "let us trust your father and my wife's mother," reclaiming Laura with the slightest cloud of anxiety shadowing his happy face, "to the same God of prayer. It will all come out right, somehow. You do not mean to prefer the field to my staff, in New York, a few weeks, collecting this shattered expedition again?"

"I mean, General, that nothing will satisfy —"

"You shall not say me," put in Madge, "nor my father. You, Mark and Laura, bear me protest."

"True," Smiles resumed. "Nothing will satisfy my own sense of — well, of duty and reparation, when I think of my poor father, but plain hard service in the field."

There was something so calmly resolute in the man's air that the young general checked himself midway of his protest, and was silent. Then he asked:

"Reparation? What would satisfy you, — to be half killed in battle?"

"I would have been as glad to avoid maiming as the next fellow," said Smiles, with an attempt to make light of the presentiments that he could not quite trifle away, "But I fear that is not to be."

"Pshaw," said Laura. "You must not return, sir, to your father's prescience of future events." And then she was sorry that she had been so frank.

Captain Smiles gave her a curious look, half pity and the other half forgiveness, yet unmistakably not dislodged from the mysterious and prophetic impression that was upon him. Who can explain yet, who can deny, that such impressions of the future do cast their images over our souls at times?

"At all events, General," Smiles resumed, "I must go to the front. I must make this family name of mine a comfort to myself, at least, to wear, by being willing to have no name among the living. My father is a fugitive from — God pity me! What sober prose is this for lover's talks."

"It is war-time, old fellow," laughed Broon, with a sad cadence. Then looking away over the sea, "We young folks have n't got to safe anchorage yet, as father would say."

"Pardon me, said Smiles, "but you have, General, if you please."

"How so?" with a surprised stare. "Your father has picked up a pilot and has read the papers. I just overheard him telling your

mother some rather joyful tidings. You haven't seen him since?"

"No; I confess I don't catch your meaning," said Broon, yet rousing himself as he saw the old skipper approaching, shaking the New York papers in his hands.

"The papers are full of it, my son."

"Full of what, father? The latest battle?"

"Bless you, no. The army ain't doin' anything. That makes an old fellow like me sad. But I can't help feelin' personally kind o' all sails full. You see, resin an' tar are way up out o' sight. Jest as I expected. Bob, I'm — well, I don't mind sayin' it out, right here, among shipmates as 't were. And you all know I'm too old to foller the sea again."

"Father, you haven't a selfish hair in your head," exclaimed Mark, springing up and grasping the old man's hand. "I see it all. Thank God for you. Your speculation has turned out well?"

"I can sell out to-day, and be independent! But I shall only sell half."

"Allow me to congratulate you, sir," said Captain Smiles, but not venturing to look at his superior officers, on whose valor and patriotism he realized that he had cast reflection.

"Yes," resumed the captain, looking round half regretfully on his vessel, "she goes back without me. But I'm too old to foller the sea. I'll stop ashore now and live on my salt money, please the kind God."

"Tar and resin money, rather," laughed Laura, taking his arm, newspapers and all.

"I am so glad for you, uncle dear," added Madge.

And then the congratulations being complete, all these young people began to think out what effect on the future this sudden bewilderment of renewed riches was to have. If it had been any time but war-time, the future would have been gilded as with a sunrise, but not now. Yet Mark Broon had gone into the army when rich; it was not on that phase of things that he was ruminating, head down, then looking up and remarking questioningly:

"Of course?"

"Yes," resumed his father, "and I shall at once take back the lodge in the woods for ye, my boy. Before night of the first day ashore, I'll have Eaglecroft and the town house again in hand."

"But, father, all that is excellent."

The general's voice was firm now.

"Yet how about this Lane-Smiles litigation? That worries me most, if you 'll pardon me, Captain Smiles; and I 'm to be too busy to give it a moment's attention. As soon as I can clear up the wreckage of my unlucky expedition I must be off again, of course, no man can tell whither. I want to take Laura with me, if possible."

"Exactly," was the old man's reply. "You fellers just push right on in your fightin', and I'll attend to all your business on shore."

"My wretched father —," began Captain Smiles, his face pale as death.

"And my unhappy mother —," Laura interrupted, her eyes filling.

"Young man," sharply, yet not unkindly, the old sailor addressed Smiles, "and you, my pretty niece, are you two people engaged to ship together?"

"It is impossible, sir," said Smiles, "that we should be, however much we might wish it. After a battle or two, possibly Mayor Hardy and his noble wife might be willing to listen to my suit."

"Why, I like that, young man," said the skipper. "You can show us the kind of blood in your veins, whoever 's your father, And my

money," with a tender look bent on Laura, whose face was now hiding its tears on Mark's shoulder, "why, money can fix up this — this crookedness that has involved poor Mrs. Lane's property."

"Hear me!" vehemently Captain Smiles began. "Is that what you mean? Why, there is nothing wrong there. Do you not see that my unhappy father would never dare claim the fulfilment of any contract for that farm? Great God, pity me! My father is a criminal! His graver offence against the security of a transport full of United States troops has driven him a fugitive from his country. Oh, I thought I had rectified his wrong! I tried. I did! I did! God must know I tried, both to block his scheme and to hide the proof of it from his enemies!"

And Smiles, with hands clutched behind his back, an agony of shame on his features, paced back and forth in the little space where the group of pitying friends gazed on him in silence.

"Well, Laura, that's good news for you. That's true, too," said Mark, in a low tone, in his wife's ear. "It is generally the way, in a good God's world, that scamps circumvent them-

selves at last, give them time enough. Now all that we have to do is to see that mother is cured of her delusions, and kept from others. The old Bible on our table and our Sundays in a Christian church will be wholesome antidotes."

"I tried to cover father's tracks," groaned Erastus Smiles, now suddenly confronting them, and pouring out his speech again in eloquent sorrow. "If I did wrong in that, Heaven knows that I was honest, for I shipped myself in the crazy craft that nearly sent us to the bottom. Oh, shame, shame! I suppose, now, that that man got thousands of dollars as the price of our imperiled lives, his own's son's life included. Wait. Hear me through. He has fled. His professional enemies have the proofs. He will never return. He is a sick man at the best. I hope it is insanity. I could love him then. He will die in Canada. You are all free of your troubles, except — except this sweet girl and myself. I shall do one thing. I shall confront bullets. If God lets me live, — and perhaps he will, for my mother's prayers and Miss Hardy's — "

"And your own, boy. Say your own prayers, child. Don't think that it is in man to atone

for his own or others' sins," said the old captain, tenderly. "There is One who suffered for us all. Since Calvary, each may pray for himself."

"Yes, my friends," responded Smiles, now casting himself down on the bench beside Madge. "I am going straight back to the faith of my Christian mother. No one knows, except he has been there, the horror of that abyss of superstition from whence I am struggling upward. The world all chaos; no Bible, no altar, no honor. Nay, no law but luck; no good but gains. Yet ghosts and visions; a gibberish of so-called inspirations, and all these prompting to added lies. The earth not real; the sky not real; men and woman of truth not real. Nothing real but appetites. Despised by the virtuous, and hating them in revenge. Pitied by those who love you, and ashamed of the glances of their kind eyes. Oh, my friends, this is the deep into which my once orthodox father sunk, and whither he was willing to pull me down. I can only try to believe that at last he was sincere in his mad delusions, — that he himself really had come to think, in his lunacy, that the universe was false, and there was no God!"

"Stop!"

It was Madge Hardy that cried out. She put her handsome hand lovingly across his lips. He took down her hand quietly, and held it, while he added:

"Now it is my prayer that I may once offer my life, in a place of courage, for my fellows and this great country; if Heaven gives it back to me—"

"I will marry you, if I have to be hands for you all your days!" cried Madge Hardy, this time stopping his lips with her free, soft palm.

* * * * * *

On the twentieth day of September, just eleven weeks after the battle of Gettysburg, there was a joyous wedding at the handsome residence of Ex-mayor Hardy, in the pretty city of S——.

Everybody that we know was there. Old Captain Broon, with his broad laughter; his quiet wife; Mrs. Lane, quite like other folks at last again, thanks to her residence for three months in the Broon mansion in New York; Mrs. Smiles, a gracious lady in widow's weeds, whom the reader has never seen, her pretty daughters at her side, and a look upon her

sweet, sad features such as the landscape sometimes wears when a storm has just passed, and at evening time it is light.

General Mark Broon was there, all in splendid military dress, with Laura and her crooning little daughter most of the time upon her arm; for it was still war-time, and the general's hours with them were to be as yet few; he said, as it was a home wedding, and another wedding in war-time, "the infantry would not seem out of place."

It was a happy wedding. It was the gift of God. God's blessing was asked upon it, the God who hears prayer. This all these Christian women believed; believing this, they were to send these two brave men back to the wars in good cheer. It was evident that the groom was quite able again to do good service as colonel on General Broon's staff; they hoped to the end, which now, thank God, began to seem not far off.

Madge Hardy, at the right place in the ceremony, took Erastus Smiles' left hand. The right hand was miles away at Gettysburg.

After five and twenty years, at this writing, the name of Smiles is no shame to its one-armed owner, as he walks, an honored citizen,

the streets of S——. Providentially, Mr. Hardy's fortune left him no need for two hands to earn bread. But yet there are no busier hearts and heads than those of "the two generals," as people in New York and S—— call Smiles and Broon, who are the happy burden-bearers of three of the largest benevolent institutions in those two cities, not to speak of less known charities of Christian gentlemen of wealth, with leisure for such noble service.

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